

THE OFFICIAL GAMES MAGAZINE OF BEST BUY®

@Gamer

ISSUE 021 | JULY/AUGUST 2012

HANDS-ON >>>

MEDAL OF HONOR WARFIGHTER

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• We've Got Review Fever!

Scores for new Diablo, Batman, Pokémon. PG.61

First Looks at Huge Sequels

Previews for Dead Space 3, Halo 4, Crysis 3. PG.18

Do MMOs Intimidate You?

Our guide will have you questing in no time. PG.54

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N ERED.



| rewardzone

**GAMERS
CLUB**
[UNLOCKED]

In this
ISSUECOVER
STORY46 MEDAL OF HONOR
WARFIGHTERThis FPS reboot continues with
a new sequel

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GEAR

So much gear, so little time to sift
through it all! We pick out the best of the
best of game-improving items.

MMO FEATURE

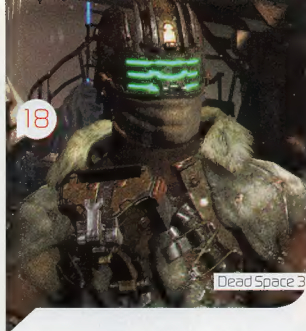
So, you're a noob, and getting labeled as
one can be a tragic experience. Let us help
with our handy-dandy notebook...er, guide.

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10 TOP 10 E3 HIGHLIGHTS

Didn't make it to E3? Didn't even watch the live streams? Play
catch up with our top 10! And we've got lots of Wii U info, too!



Dead Space 3



Crysis 3



Lollipop Chainsaw



LEGO Batman 2



NCAA Football 13

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GAME TIME



MEET THE STAFF



Charlie Barratt Executive Editor
Recently, Charlie announced that he and his wife are expecting. The first @GAMER baby is slated for a September release date.



Ryan Taljonick Associate Editor
Ryan went back home to Michigan in the middle of our deadlines (thanks). We hope he makes it back here to California in one piece. Sup, Ryan?!



Jenny Esdaile Art Director
Jenny is dreaming of her upcoming Mexican beach getaway. Whenever someone asks her what Spanish she's learned, all she says is "cerveza."



Jillian Lungaro Designer
Jillian went all out on this issue's Papercraft blockhead—*Diablo III*'s Witch Doctor! Let's hope we're not all doomed: Witch Doctor + Papercraft = Witchcraft?

Letter from the EDITOR

WELCOME TO @GAMER



In the June @GAMER, I talked about how exciting it is to go to the E3 trade show and see all of the new wares we'll be playing from now into early next year.

However, the issue you're holding, the one we make right after E3, is the most exciting one—and it's also the scariest. Exciting because we get to include some products that debuted at E3, but scary because we have little time to put those pages together.

We want to make sure each issue is packed with fresh content for you to take in, but E3 gives us so much from which to choose.

Be sure to check out our E3 highlights on page 10, which is followed by our look at the Wii U and some of the games for it that were

shown. We also have previews of highly anticipated titles that were revealed at E3: *Dead Space 3* (page 18), *Halo 4* (page 22), *Need for Speed Most Wanted* (page 26), and *Injustice: Gods Among Us* (page 36). Enjoy!

Andy Eddy
Editor-in-Chief

QR CODES AND HOW THEY WORK

Throughout the magazine you'll notice QR codes for some of the games. Simply install a QR reader for your smartphone (or install the Best Buy app for iPhone or Android), aim it at the QR code, and you'll be taken to a trailer for the game you just scanned.



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Write to us!



WHERE ART THOU?



✎ This is some art of Ryan as CHICKENMAN that I did on my tablet. Sorry, Ryan, I am not a comic artist, more of a doodling toon artist, thus the overdramatic-sized nose! I'm behind in podcasts, so sorry about this being late. I hope you all enjoy!

—Adam C. via email

ED: Hey Adam, Ryan here—thanks a billion tons for this awesome drawing. Funny thing: My nose actually IS that big. Just about, anyway. We definitely appreciate that you listen to our podcast and spent the time putting together this dashing illustration. I think it perfectly captures my...er, chicken-esque charm.

✎ The new Wii U looks like a waste of time and money. Nintendo dominated consoles in the past. It's a shame they can't do it again. I enjoy the 3DS and I'm glad it's finally getting some good games.

—Aylin via Facebook

ED: Don't write the Wii U off just yet, Aylin—Nintendo's new console may surprise skeptics once it launches later this year. A more streamlined online service coupled with high definition and broader support for third-party games puts the console in a good position, and Nintendo fans are some of the most loyal around. Need proof? Just watch what happens once a new Zelda game launches.

✎ If the Mass Effect 3 ending isn't what we want, do you think BioWare will just keep making more and more extended cuts until everyone is happy?

—Lucas M-H. via Facebook

ED: According to BioWare, the Mass Effect 3 endings are already set in stone. The Extended Cut DLC won't offer any new

endings to the trilogy, but it will offer additional cinematics, epilogue scenes and more to existing endings. BioWare believes this extra content will allow players to reach closure. Hopefully, this free Extended Cut DLC, coming this summer, will satisfy most gamers, because we don't believe BioWare will keep making more. Trying to make everyone happy is a never-ending endeavor, so this one attempt is probably the last.

✎ I was finally able to watch the conferences at E3 this year! I watched online, and the publishers and "big 3" discussed a lot of games and new ideas. But, was there anything at E3 worth mentioning that wasn't brought up during presentations we normal people saw?

—Sara A. via email

ED: Our E3 coverage (see page 10) mentions Beyond: Two Souls, but the @GAMER editors sat in a demo given by David Cage (director of Beyond and Heavy Rain at Paris-based developer Quantic Dream). There, he talked about his inspiration for the Jodie Holmes character and what it was like working with Ellen Page to bring Jodie to life in the game. Moments like that are when E3 becomes extra special.

✎ There will be five Pokémon games released all within a year once Pokémon Black 2 and Pokémon White 2 come out. Do you think Nintendo is milking it?

—Wes G. via email

ED: Nintendo knows Pokémon is a reliable franchise, but it doesn't seem to be abusing it. Pokémon Conquest, the newest spin-off, is a quality game. It may well be better than previous spin-offs, which weren't exactly carelessly put together. And the Black and White sequels? We're excited to see how those turn out!

BEST BUY CUSTOMER REVIEWS & RATINGS

WANT TO HAVE YOUR SAY?

What are you playing? Do you like it? Do you hate it? Let other @GAMER readers know what you think—send in a 50- to 100-word review to reviews@atgamer.com, and we'll post 'em in each issue.

Submit your review to: reviews@atgamer.com

DRAGON'S DOGMA

The game's ad campaign left me feeling swindled. I expected a grand story melded with action-adventure, à la Skyrim, but with a more riveting narrative. Instead I got an open-world adventure RPG with a thin narrative—but an intuitive "pawn" system and amazingly entertaining combat (killing a large creature never felt more rewarding). Sure, it wasn't what I thought I wanted, but once the initial disappointment passed, it proved its greatness.

Score: 4.25/5

—Dawn F.

GAMING TRENDS, 140 CHARACTERS AT A TIME

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RYAN TALJONICK [TWITTER: @RYANTALJONICK](https://twitter.com/RYANTALJONICK)
 ✎ THQ's E3 showing contained some great-looking underdogs. *Metro: Last Light*, *Company of Heroes 2*, *Darksiders II*. I'm excited for all three.



ANDY EDDY [TWITTER: @VIDGAMES](https://twitter.com/AVIDGAMES)
 ✎ Can't wait for the weekend: *LEGO Batman 2* and *Amazing Spider-Man* games on Saturday, then attending the NASCAR race Sunday.



CASEY DEFEITAS [TWITTER: @SHINYCASEYD](https://twitter.com/SHINYCASEYD)
 ✎ Dreamed I played *The Last Guardian* last night...It was awesome.



CHARLIE BARRATT [TWITTER: @CHARLIEBARRATT](https://twitter.com/CHARLIEBARRATT)
 ✎ *Star Wars 1313* is basically *Star Wars: Uncharted*. This is not a bad thing.

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Blips...

News, rumors, and game culture deconstructed

NEWS BITES

38 STUDIOS, the fledgling game developer behind *Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning*, has shut down and laid off its entire staff, including the *Rise of Nations* team at Big Huge Games.



VALVE announced that its upcoming action real-time-strategy, *DotA 2*, will be free-to-play, but emphasized that the game will not be pay-to-win.



SONY revealed more bonuses for PlayStation Plus subscribers, including three free games a month. Already released for free download are *LittleBigPlanet 2* and *InFamous 2*.



BEST BUY BONUS

HALO 4

Pre-order *Halo 4* and get the exclusive Venator Raptor armor to customize your Spartan during multiplayer.

INFORMATION WARFARE

WATCH DOGS COMING IN 2013

♥ Aiden Pearce: hacker hero or cyber terrorist?



Smartphones, tablets, computers—in today's world, we're always connected to the Internet. Many folks have become dependent on technology, constantly absorbing information while leaving digital footprints with the details of their personal lives. Watch Dogs, Ubisoft Montreal's upcoming open-world action-adventure game based in Chicago, asks one important question: who's in control of these computers we so heavily rely on?

Enter protagonist Aiden Pearce, a man capable of hacking into the futuristic network that controls everything from the city's traffic lights to surveillance cameras. In our E3 demo, Aiden used a mix of stealth and all sorts of cyber techniques to stalk and kill a target, including disrupting cell phone calls to serve as a distraction, tapping calls to obtain mission-critical information, and manipulating traffic lights to cause massive pileups and incapacitate his target. ☹



THE RAPTR REPORT

What are the hottest games being played by Xbox 360 and PC gamers? Raptr.com has the answer.

● MINECRAFT



- 1 **Minecraft**
- 2 **Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3**
- 3 **Diablo III**
- 4 **League of Legends**
- 5 **Battlefield 3**
- 6 **FIFA Soccer 12**
- 7 **Gears of War 3**
- 8 **World of Warcraft**
- 9 **The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim**
- 10 **Mass Effect 3**
- 11 **Call of Duty: Black Ops**
- 12 **Halo: Reach**
- 13 **Max Payne 3**
- 14 **Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier**
- 15 **NBA 2K12**

● MASS EFFECT 3



INSIDE GOSSIP BUNGIE'S NEW DESTINY?

Due to Activision's trial with ex-Infinity Ward employees, the publisher was forced to make public a contract detailing its agreement with Bungie. According to the documents, the ex-Halo producer will develop four "sci-fiction action shooter" games codenamed project "Destiny." The first is slated for fall 2013 and will initially be Xbox 360-exclusive.

IN THE WORKS

Robotaki Zombie \\ Robotaki, founded by Call of Duty's creative strategist Robert Bowling, is working on a new zombie survival game for next-gen consoles titled *Human Element*.



DON'T FORGET THE POPCORN!

AT THE MOVIES

Resident Evil spawns yet another loose film adaption, while a well-loved indie hit is assigned a new director.

RESIDENT EVIL: RETRIBUTION

The best videogame-to-movie adaption (well, financially speaking, anyway) will have its fifth installment hit theaters on September 14 this year. *Retribution* will feature *Resident Evil* 4's Leon S. Kennedy as well as the fear-some Las Plagas parasite.



SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

Josh Trank apparently directed the indie superhero flick *Chronicle* well enough to warrant attention from Sony. In addition to the Spider-Man spin-off *Venom*, the studio has also signed him to helm *Shadow of the Colossus*, an adaptation first revealed back in 2009.



NEW GEARS OF WAR EXPECTED EARLY 2013



Almost 15 years before the first *Gears of War*, Lt. Damon Baird and Pvt. Augustus Cole of the Kilo Squad were put on trial for treason. Why? What happened? Relive these events in the prequel *Gears of War: Judgment*, which introduces an improved enemy AI system called Smart Spawn System and a new class-based multiplayer mode, OverRun.

NERD WORDS

Specialis Revelio!



Muggles, get excited! Sony announced a new apparatus, the Wonderbook, for the PlayStation Move at E3. The

first title revealed for the interactive reading device is *Book of Spells*, a *Harry Potter*-themed interactive book with passages written by author J.K. Rowling. Players will learn and cast spells at home via augmented reality with their Move controller turned magic wand.

Microsoft Bullish on TV, Tunes



SMARTGLASS ENDEAVORS

Microsoft's recently announced SmartGlass turns any tablet or smartphone into an extension of your Xbox 360. Watch *Game of Thrones*, for example, and the app could display a living map of Westeros or list fun facts about the current episode. SmartGlass will interact with both games and videos, and surf with Internet Explorer, too.

XBOX MUSIC



MUSIC TO YOUR EARS

Details on a new Xbox Music app for Xbox Live are still vague, but Microsoft promises the service will boast over 30 million songs and can be controlled via voice through Kinect.



CONSTANT STREAM OF ENTERTAINMENT

More than 35 content providers for Xbox Live are coming soon, including Machinima, Slacker, Paramount, and ESPN—which will provide 24/7 live video of everything sports.



Words: Susie Ochs

Featured Game:

FUN-N-GUN

This shooter has quality solo and co-op action—and some killer weapons.



N.O.V.A.

Platforms:

\$4.99, Gameloft, gameloft.com



Captain Kal Wardin is back in this latest installment of a fun first-person shooter series set in a deep, gorgeously realized sci-fi universe. The 10-level single-player campaign has you battling the alien Volterrites to save Earth, but even better are the six multiplayer modes for up to 12 players. It's got responsive controls, vehicles, mechs, six maps, and some truly awesome guns. This new version even lets you jump into vehicles with your friends for some cooperative butt-kicking. The physics and graphics are spot-on, too—it plays like an Xbox game, but it's 80 percent cheaper, is universal for iPad and iPhone, and an Android version was recently released as well.

The whole game looks this good.



▼ You're a minifig, Harry!



LEGO HARRY POTTER: YEARS 5-7

Platforms:
\$4.99, Warner Bros.,
videogames.lego.com

If you liked Years 1-4, this universal iPhone/iPad app is a no-brainer. The iPad's big, beautiful screen makes the 3D worlds sparkle, and you get to relive Harry's last years at Hogwarts by casting spells, collecting coins, completing quests, unlocking achievements, and sharpening your dueling skills with the 99-cent dueling expansion. Oh yeah, and don't forget the final battle against the one who cannot be named.

▼ 2000: In arcades. 2012: In your hand.



MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 2

Platforms:
\$4.99, Capcom,
capcommobile.com

Who would win in a fight, Chun-Li or Iron Man? Now we know. This universal iPhone/iPad app packs in 56 Marvel and Capcom characters, and with 3-on-3 tag-team battles, the potential combinations seem endless. You can play a friend in Bluetooth matchups. And the all-new Flick button makes it easier to pull off special attacks with a casual-yet-devastating flick of your thumb. Ready? Fight.

▼ Mmm, duck.



SHARK DASH

Platforms:
\$0.99, Gameloft, gameloft.com

It's pretty much Angry Birds under the sea—and I'm not saying that's a bad thing. Your shark will devour rubber ducks across 96 gradually unlocked levels. The rubber-band physics puzzles require a good mix of careful thought, well-placed undos, chain reactions, and plain dumb luck. It's easy enough for little kids, but tricky enough to keep grown-ups muttering "okay, one more try" through gritted teeth. Available for iPhone/iPad and Android.

▼ Just chillin', havin' an adventure.



LOSTWINDS 2: WINTER OF THE MELODIAS

Platforms:
\$3.99, Frontier Developments,
lostwinds.frontier.co.uk

This universal iPhone/iPad app will suck you in to an enchanting fantasy adventure. You'll explore the vast environments using the power of your singing voice, and special abilities based on the elements. The graphics and music are beautiful (especially on the new iPad), and the charming story makes solving the diverse puzzles extra satisfying.

Go, speed mole, go.



MOLE KART I

Platforms:

Free, Taomee Entertainment Network, m.61.com



If you're still holding your breath waiting for Mario Kart on the iPad or Android, you should exhale (because it ain't coming) and just get Mole Kart I instead. Tilt controls make it easy to drive and drift. The power-ups aren't quite as fun to unleash as red turtle shells, but with three modes, local network multiplayer, and plenty of characters and racetracks to unlock, you'll want to keep the pedal to the metal.

Blood communication skills often lead vampires and zombies into conflict.



DARK LEGENDS

Platforms:

Free, Spacetime Studios, darklegends.com



This free-to-play MMO pits gamers on iPad, iPhone, Android, and Chrome against each other (all on one server, too) for blood-soaked hack-n-slash gameplay with high vampire style. Naturally, you can spend real-world money on extra items and health packs via in-app purchases, but even if you never spend a dime, you'll find hours of gameplay and enough blood to fill an ocean.

It's like having a party wherever you go

PASS AND PLAY

HAND OFF!

The sharing skills you learned in kindergarten never go out of style. These 10 games let friends interact on one tablet.



FORBIDDEN ISLAND (\$4.99, forbiddenislandapp.com)

Up to four players can cooperate to tackle this brain-tickling board game on a single iPad. And if you're flying solo, just control all the players yourself.



CENTRIFUEUD (\$1.99, secret-library.com)

A one-button game for up to four players on one iPad, *Centrifueud* is great for parties. Everyone grab a corner and get ready for fast-paced, highly competitive action.



NARD CLUB (\$1.99, bit.ly/nardclub)

Once you're done giggling at the name, you'll find a strategic two-player board game that looks like backgammon but plays a little differently, with online multiplayer too.



DICE WITH BUDDIES (Free, withbuddies.com)

Turn-based *Dice With Buddies* re-creates *Yahtzee* on the iPad and iPhone, with pass-and-play games, plus online matches against Facebook friends or random opponents.



GIN RUMMY HD (\$1.99, trivialtechnology.com)

This isn't your grandma's gin rummy—OK, maybe it is, but better. It's got four multiplayer modes, three variations, online and local matches, even voice chat.



WURDLE (\$1.99, wurdlegame.com)

Finding words in a jumble of letter tiles isn't exactly groundbreaking gameplay. So why is *Wurdle*'s frenetic pass-and-play hotseat mode so darn addictive?



BLOOD & HONOR (\$1.99, sendstorminteractive.com)

This *Risk*-esque world domination game packs pass-and-play, plus real-time online matches. With seven maps, three difficulty levels, and stakes-raising bonus cards, it never gets old.



SMALL WORLD (\$6.99, daysofwonder.com)

You and a friend can huddle around one iPad and race to grab all the land in this highly strategic European board game. Two expansion packs are offered as \$1.99 in-app purchases.



ASCENSION: CHRONICLE OF THE GODSLAYER

(\$2.99, playdekgames.com)

Three *Magic: The Gathering* tournament champions dreamed up this clever deck-building game for iPhone and iPad, with 50-plus hand-drawn cards, and tons of strategy fun.



IT'S ALIVE: THE MONSTER BUILDING GAME

(\$2.99, itsalivegame.com)

Up to five players, human or AI, race to collect body parts and build their monster first, buying, selling, and even auctioning limbs in turn-based matches.

E3 2012 HIGHLIGHTS

Sure, the next Xbox and PlayStation weren't revealed, but this year's show still managed to wow us with innovative new brands and stellar-looking sequels. Read on for the 10 games that have us most excited.



Words: @GAMER staff • Event photos: Rick Kim



WATCH DOGS

Secrets are impossible to keep in a world as networked as ours, so we were pleasantly shocked when Ubisoft managed to reveal a new game we had never even heard of before. And we were duly impressed when we realized the game was about—hey, will you look at that—exposing secrets and lies through the hacking of our interconnected world. Add a GTA-sized setting, Uncharted-level facial animation, and revolutionary integration with mobile devices to that already fascinating theme, and it's easy to see why Watch Dogs was our number-one E3 highlight.



2

THE LAST OF US

Surviving a post-apocalyptic world may finally require more than just good aim. In our demo of *The Last of Us*, survivors Joel and Ellie scavenged for limited supplies, using them sparingly to overcome hostile humans and mutants. This game is more about strategic survival than it is action—and that's cool by us.



RAYMAN LEGENDS

The best-looking, least-gimmicky Wii U game we played at E3 was—shockingly—not from Nintendo. *Rayman Legends* is just as fun as *Origins* for player one, but a crazily unique “I need this system now!” blast for player two on the tablet controller.

4

BEYOND TWO SOULS

Quantic Dream's follow-up to *Heavy Rain* explores the life of Jodie Holmes (played by actress Ellen Page) and her connection to a seemingly benevolent spirit. *Beyond* features some of the most life-like motion capture tech around, and we're excited by the chance to control Jodie's ghost friend to protect her from harm via varied puzzle-like sequences.

3

ANDY'S FAVORITE MOMENT OF THE SHOW...

I could be a cynic and say my favorite moment was when I boarded my flight home, but I won't. My actual favorite moments were when I got some quality time with games I'd heard about, but hadn't previously seen, such as *Star Trek* (above), and *Halo 4* (right). Wait... or maybe it's when I found out there'll be an *Angry Birds* compilation for console (in HD!) and 3DS later this year. Can't decide!

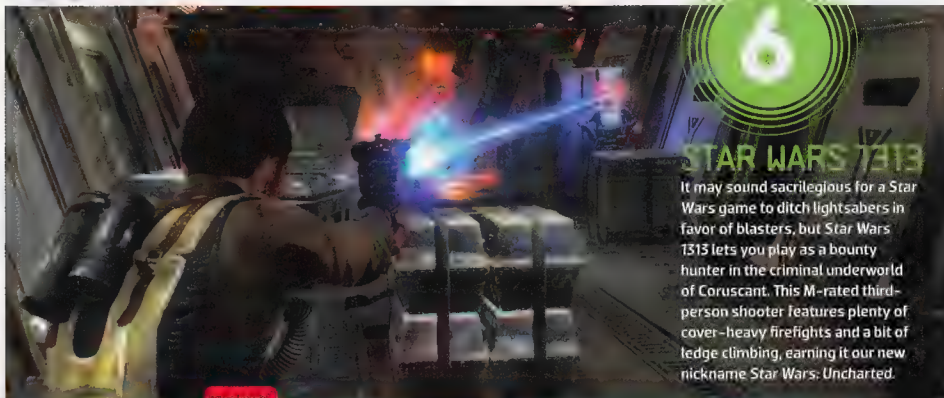


5

PAPER MARIO: STICKER STAR

We need more excuses to play the 3DS, and *Paper Mario: Sticker Star* looks like the best one coming. Surprisingly, the 2D storybook style is a perfect fit for the 3D technology, transforming the franchise's flat world into a pop-up wonderland.





STAR WARS 1313

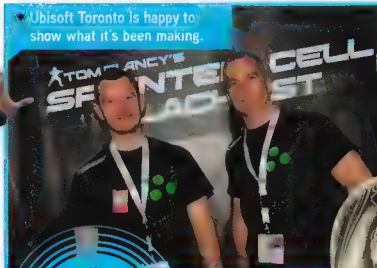
It may sound sacrilegious for a Star Wars game to ditch lightsabers in favor of blasters, but *Star Wars 1313* lets you play as a bounty hunter in the criminal underworld of Coruscant. This M-rated third-person shooter features plenty of cover-heavy firefights and a bit of ledge climbing, earning it our new nickname *Star Wars: Uncharted*.

0000 MY GOD!



CHARLIE'S FAVORITE MOMENT OF THE SHOW...

I won't lie. Seeing Usher perform *Dance Central 3*, Nathan Fillion kill-streak in *Halo 4*, Trey Parker and Matt Stone play an RPG based on their show *South Park*, and (yes, this really happened) Verne "Mini-Me" Troyer slice people in half via *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*... it's a pretty cool perk of attending E3. Honestly, though, the celebrities that left me most star-struck were the game creators: Shaking hands with Ed Boon (*Mortal Kombat*) and brushing shoulders with Shigeru Miyamoto (*Mario*, *Zelda*) was the real highlight of 2012's conference.



SPLINTER CELL BLACKLIST

Sam Fisher is different this time around. Sure, he'll still have his stealthy skills to help him get through the bad guys, but now he's part of a covert group established by the president to fight a new terror org, The Blacklist, so he'll have some help from others. He'll also have a "Killing in Motion" ability, where you tag enemies and hit a button to set him off—looks like Ubisoft is using some of Assassin's Creed's flow.

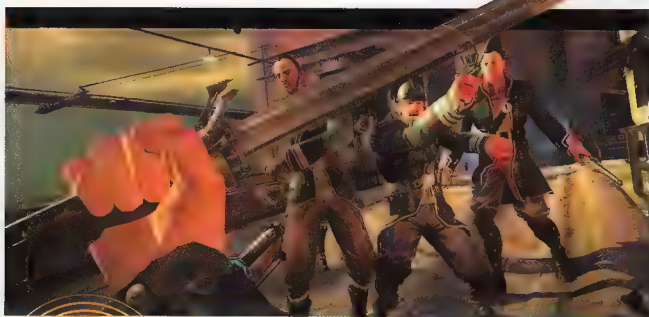
LOL USHER





RYAN'S FAVORITE MOMENT OF THE SHOW

Ubisoft's press conference was easily one of the best showings at E3—not only did the company unveil a hot new IP, *Watch Dogs*, but it followed that up with heavy hitters, such as *Assassin's Creed III*, *Far Cry 3*, and *Splinter Cell Blacklist*.



8

DISHONORED

Playing *Dishonored* is a lot like playing *BioShock*, except with sword fights and even more twisted powers. Best of all, each of our hands-on demos played out very differently, depending on whether we possessed a guard to stealthily infiltrate a protected building or summoned a plague of enemy-gnawing rats to go in guns—er, rats—blazing.



LUIGI'S MANSION: DARK MOON

Luigi's Mansion was an underrated GameCube gem, with innocent (yet still creepy) scares worthy of Disneyland's Haunted Mansion. We can't wait to play through a similarly ghoulish-yet-goofy setting, now with "gotchal" 3DS effects.

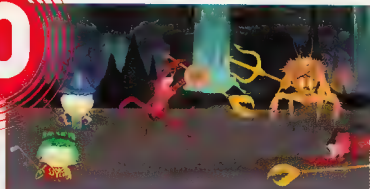
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This year's show still

more of a wow us



10

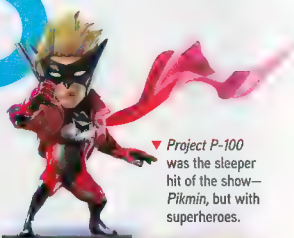


SOUTH PARK: THE STICK OF TRUTH

You'd be forgiven for mistaking *The Stick of Truth* for an actual episode of *South Park*—after all, the Obsidian-developed RPG retains the show's visual style and trademark wit. As the new kid in town, you'll help Cartman and company take down emo kids and crab people with golf clubs and magical farts.

NINTENDO

E3 RECAP



▼ Project P-100 was the sleeper hit of the show—Pikmin, but with superheroes.

↘ We've played the Wii U! Here are our impressions of the new console and its best and biggest games.

Nintendo's changed everything...again. Five and a half years after revolutionizing the industry (for better or worse) with the motion-sensitive Wii, the company is introducing yet another innovation: the Wii U tablet controller, a screen-and-pad combo that connects with the main action on your television in cool and unusual ways. It's definitely awkward to use at first, and seemingly geared more towards social than solo play, but it also offers an extra-interactive experience just not available anywhere else. The true test, as always, will be the games, and whether creators other than Nintendo can take full advantage of these fun new tools.



IS THAT A PIKMIN IN YOUR POCKET?



▲ The next *Wii Sports* or the next *Wii Music*? Only time will tell.

▲ A different perspective on *Animal Crossing*



NINTENDO LAND

- Publisher: Nintendo
- Developer: Nintendo

Thankfully, this is more than another bland collection of short, quickly forgotten mini-games. *Nintendo Land*'s 12 "attractions" offer surprising depth and variety: a cooperative sword-slashing dungeon quest themed like *The Legend of Zelda*, a heart-pounding ghosts vs. hunters competition styled like *Luigi's Mansion*, and more. All feature totally unique, totally different uses of the Wii U controller.

▼ *Musical Bunchies*...will it ever grow old?



PIKMIN 3

- Publisher: Nintendo
- Developer: Nintendo EAD

While the Wii U controller acted only as a map during our demo, we did get a sense of the sequel's tweaked gameplay. Battles are more combat-intense than in *Pikmin* past, with a dodge move to help handle the extra action. The new, heavy Rock Pikmin knocks down walls and breaks enemy armor—and we glimpsed a mysterious pink, winged Pikmin in the title screen.

▼ Mucha multilayer *Mario* madness



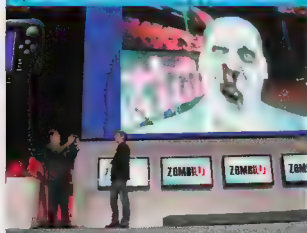
NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. U

- Publisher: Nintendo
- Developer: Nintendo EAD

Nintendo won't make the same mistake it made with the 3DS by not having a Mario game at the Wii U launch. And, no surprise, our tryout revealed it will offer the expected Mario Bros. hilarity...in HD. Having a player putting out (or taking away) platforms for the other players via the tablet makes for wild gameplay that can flip between cooperative and cutthroat with each tap of the touch screen.

An extra-interactive
experience just not
available anywhere else

▼ Zombie madness with the Wii U's touch



ZOMBI U

- Publisher: Ubisoft
- Developer: Ubisoft Montpellier

Survival horror and the Wii U mix frighteningly well: You can lockpick, aim crossbows, scan corpses for signs of undead life, and frantically rummage through your inventory...all with the tablet controller. The game moves in real time, though, so zombies can sneak up on you (and permanently end you with a single bite) while you're distracted by any of the above.

▼ *Wario*: the original hipster



GAME & WARIO

- Publisher: Nintendo
- Developer: Intelligent Systems

Weird as ever, Wario returns with a set of minigames that are shorter, simpler, a lot stranger, but sometimes more fun than those in *Nintendo Land*. We especially enjoyed *Shutter*, which transformed the Wii U controller into a private investigator's camera, and *Thief*, in which one player hides their tablet activities from the others.

▼ Detective fiction appearing on the controller's screen



BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY

- Publisher: Warner Bros. Interactive
- Developer: Rocksteady Studios

Games created specifically for the Wii U are one of a kind, but as we saw with the original Wii, any title made for multiple platforms may be a better experience elsewhere. In our play time, this *Armored Edition* of *Arkham City* felt unnecessary at best, and unplayable at worst (aiming a Batarang with the controller's screen seemed nearly impossible).



JULY 2012

It's National Anti-Boredom Month!

■ Game Release Date ■ The @GAMER Podcast ■ This day in videogame history...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
01 	02 - The Secret World - Test Drive: Ferrari Racing Legends - Theatrhythm Final Fantasy	03 INDEPENDENCE DAY	04 	05 	06 	07
08 	09 SEE PAGE 76	10 - Ice Age: Continental Drift - The Last Story - NCAA Football 13 - Rhythm Thief & The Emperor's Treasure	11 	12 	13 THE @GAMER PODCAST, EPISODE 42	14
15 @GAMER ISSUE 21 ON SALE	16 Heroes of Ruin	17 	18 SEE PAGE 80	19 	20 	21
22 	23 Prototype 2 (PC)	24 	25 	26 	27 THE @GAMER PODCAST, EPISODE 43	28
29 	30 - Kingdom Hearts 3D (Dream Drop Distance) - Risen 2: Dark Waters (console)	31 Kingdom Hearts 3D (Dream Drop Distance)	ARE YOU A PRE-ORDER PRO? If you want to keep tabs on all of the pre-order specials that Best Buy and game publishers have put together, just scan this QR code with your smartphone. One webpage will tell all! 			

Pre-Order Exclusives

Check out these special offers on upcoming games, available by pre-ordering now!

TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT 2

Publisher: Namco Bandai • Developer: Namco Bandai
Release Date: September 11, 2012 • ESRB: RP



Fighting rosters are important. To expand yours, pre-order Tekken Tag Tournament 2 from Best Buy to get fighters Angel and Michelle Chang.

ASSASSIN'S CREED III

Publisher: Ubisoft • Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Release Date: October 30, 2012 • ESRB: RP



Pre-order Assassin's Creed III on PS3 or Xbox 360 and get a free SteelBook collectible case featuring artwork by award-winning comic artist Alex Ross.

AUGUST 2012

It's Admit You're Happy Month!

■ Game Release Date ■ The @GAMER Podcast ■ This day in videogame history...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
SEPTEMBER 2012 HIGHLIGHTS: Far Cry 3: 9/4 NHL 13: 9/11 Borderlands 2: 9/16 Dead or Alive 5: 9/25			01	02	03	04
05	06	07	08	09	10	11
 Sleeping Dogs	■ 1985—Samus Aran, one of the first female game protagonists, debuts in <i>Metroid</i> for the original NES.	■ Persona 4 Arena ■ 2007—Governor Schwarzenegger's law prohibiting violent videogame sales to minors is shot down by federal judge Ronald Whyte.	 Persona 4 Arena	 ■ 1994— <i>Earthworm Jim</i> is released for the Sega Genesis.	 THE @GAMER PODCAST, EPISODE 44	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
		■ Darksiders II ■ Sleeping Dogs		 Darksiders II	 Dark Souls: Prepare to Die Edition (PC)	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
 Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2				■ 1991—The SNES lands on retailer shelves in North America.	THE @GAMER PODCAST, EPISODE 45	
26	27	28	29	30	31	
		■ Damage Inc.: Pacific Squadron WWII ■ Madden NFL 13 ■ RollerCoaster Tycoon 3D ■ Transformers: Fall of Cybertron	 Madden NFL 13	 Order Up! (3DS)		

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS II

Publisher: Activision • Developer: Treyarch

Release Date: November 13, 2012 • ESRB: RP

Physical items are especially cool, so why pass up an opportunity for some free videogame swag? Pre-order *Call of Duty: Black Ops II* from Best Buy and get a pair of *Call of Duty* dog tags.



HITMAN: ABSOLUTION

Publisher: Square Enix • Developer: IO Interactive

Release Date: November 20, 2012 • ESRB: RP



Assassinate in style by pre-ordering from Best Buy! You'll get a swanky Public Enemy gangster suit and the Bronson M1928, a submachine gun with a high rate of fire. Not your stealthiest option, but a deadly one.



DEAD SPACE 3

Cold, dead hands • Words: Henry Gilbert

The *Dead Space* series has ruled the survival horror genre since 2008, making derelict space ships scarier than anyone previously imagined. Each new frontier is filled with hideously deformed creatures known as Necromorphs and humans driven mad by ancient artifacts called Markers. Now, after two adventures lost in space, hero Isaac Clarke is fighting those enemies on solid ground alongside new friends in *Dead Space 3* (provided he doesn't freeze to death first).

The section of gameplay I saw takes place mere months after *Dead Space 2*, with

Isaac waking up alone in a busted cockpit on a frozen planet, calling out for "Ellie," his female companion from the previous game. Harsh conditions almost overwhelm Clarke, as icy winds blast both him and the aged, abandoned buildings nearby. He eventually gains his bearings and approaches a base, where he meets his new ally, Carver.

Isaac's attempt to follow Carver is cut short by a new hulking, insectoid Necromorph, but before he can battle the beast alone, the developers activate one of *DSS*'s hugest additions: co-op. The scene restarts with Carver right next to Isaac, and

the two join forces to jump-start an elevator, then exchange some tense tough-guy dialogue, and finally battle that same snow beast side-by-side, chasing it into a stronghold run by the fanatical Church of Unitology.

Soon they're facing human enemies—a first for the series. These trained mercenaries are more tactical than Necromorphs; their hideout is also a change of pace, with the clean, futuristic designs of the ships replaced by rough edges and a lived-in feel. To match his smarter foes, Isaac's trained up as well: You can now dodge quickly in multiple directions and shoot from cover.

▼ Okay, who taught the undead how to shoot a gun? Good thing Isaac has a new co-op buddy to help out.

After watching them work their way through humans and abominations alike (as well as successfully dismantling one huge, malfunctioning drill), my time with Clarke and Carver reached its end...with the appearance of perhaps the largest, nastiest enemy in *Dead Space* history. The Godzilla-sized beast shrugged off standard attacks and the segment abruptly ended before I found out if this new duo had fight or flight in mind. What I do know already is that *Dead Space 3* may have a new setting, but it's just as lethal as ever. ☹



**MAKE NEW FRIENDS ** Breaking with series tradition, *Dead Space 3* features campaign co-op. Little was revealed about drop in/drop out partner Carver, but based on his demeanor and telltale facial scar, he's a no-nonsense military type focused on the mission at hand. Co-op cut-scenes with Carver feel different, too, with an emphasis on action and teamwork over spooks and scares.

SUIT UP

Isaac's clanky engineer suit is a lot nimbler than before. He can roll out of harm's way or shoot from the safety of cover.



▲ Just one example of how the freezing cold changes classic enemies from past *Dead Space* games.



▲ An easy way to tell Carver apart from Isaac: the burning red eyes. Dude needs some drops.



▲ *Dead Space 3* features more of the cinematic setpieces that so impressed in the last game!



MAKE NEW ENEMIES, TOO

I encountered a number of new enemies in my demo, including the skeletal, mummified corpses known as the Feed and the human-resembling Fodder. With Fodder, though, looks are deceiving: After shooting them enough times, their torsos drop

off to reveal massive tendrils. Even the old Necromorphs are changed by the freezing conditions, with the cold grotesquely altering their already-horrific physiology. And then, of course, there are the bosses, bigger and nastier than ever before.



DEAD SPACE 3

INFO

Publisher: EA
Developer: Visceral Games
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

RELEASE DATE

February 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 2-player co-op online

GENRE

Action-horror

SUITABLE FOR

John Carpenter's *The Thing*
not gory enough for you?
This ought to do the trick.

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Shadows of the Damned plays similarly, if you don't mind M-rated humor mixed with your M-rated horror.

WANT MORE?
SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Dead Space 3*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Forget Hoth—this could be the coolest ice planet in sci-fi
- ♥ The solo and co-op campaigns are distinct
- ♥ Seems to maintain everything I loved about *Dead Space 2*



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Will competitive multiplayer return? If so, will it be more compelling than last time?

BOLDLY GO

Though the early game-play sticks to the ground, it wouldn't be *Dead Space* without, well, space.

DIZZY ISSY

Fans will be happy to know that the free-floating sections with Isaac's zero-G abilities are returning, too.

TO MATCH
SMARTER ENEMIES,
ISAAC'S TRAINED
UP AS WELL



HALO 4

343 Industries picks up where Bungie left off

• Words: Ryan Taljanick



MULTI-PLAYER PREVIEW

▼ The Red vs. Blue war rages on as Spartans participate in simulated training in *Halo 4*.

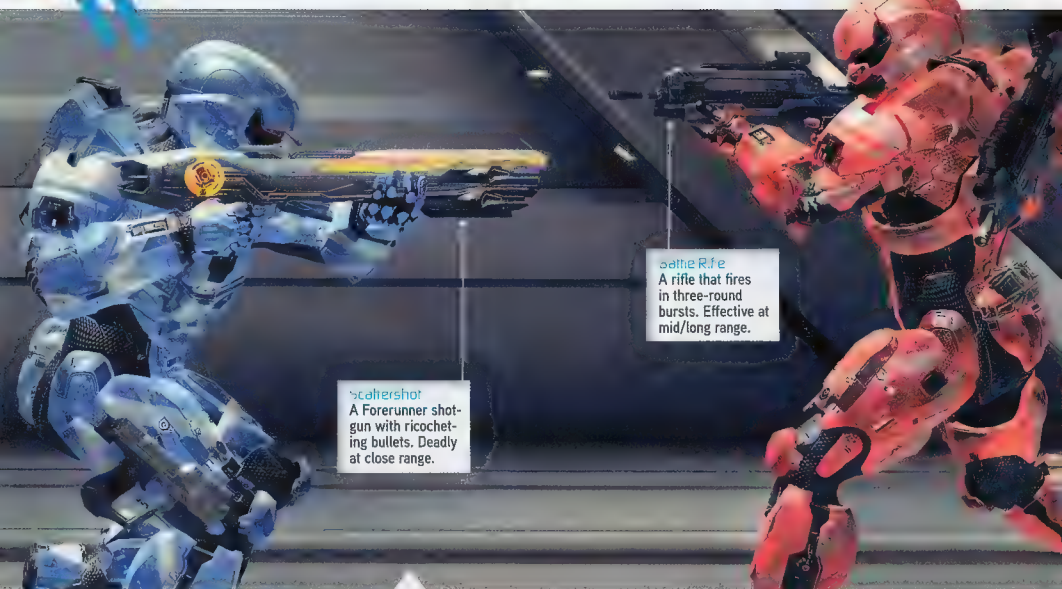
In previous *Halo* games, I always found it odd that Spartans spent time killing each other for funzies during an ongoing war with aliens intent on annihilating humanity. It didn't make sense.

But in *Halo 4*, 343 Industries' first go at the iconic FPS franchise, competitive multiplayer matches serve as simulated training sessions for up-and-coming Spartans following the war with the Covenant. Not only does this setup work contextually, but it also gives purpose to the famous Red vs. Blue engagements that first appeared in *Halo: Combat Evolved* (later made popular by Rooster Teeth Productions' comical video series). Most importantly, however, *Halo 4*'s multiplayer plays wonderfully—*Halo* vets will feel right at home.

In my hands-on time with the game, I jumped into a brand-new mode: Regicide. It's an interesting cross between Lone Wolf and King of

the Hill, where the player with the most points from kills and assists is crowned King. Killing the King scores you additional points, turning every match into a high-stakes bloodbath. It's a nice addition for gamers who like the idea of objective modes such as King of the Hill, but lack the expertise to hold the throne for long.

Of course, fan-favorite *Halo* weapons such as the Battle Rifle and Assault Rifle return, looking and sounding beefier than before. There are also plenty of new toys, including the Scattergun—a Forerunner energy shotgun whose bullets ricochet off of surfaces—and the Hardlight Shield, a defensive tool akin to a Jackal's energy shield. There are a lot of familiar elements at play in *Halo 4*'s multiplayer, encompassing traditional game modes and equipment, but 343 has managed to add just enough tweaks to get me pumped up for endless hours of competitive slaughter. After seeing the game in action, I can't help but believe *Halo* is in good hands.



Scattershot
A Forerunner shotgun with ricocheting bullets. Deadly at close range.

Battle Rifle
A rifle that fires in three-round bursts. Effective at mid/long range.



STRANDED

While the devs aren't sharing much regarding Halo 4's single-player campaign, we managed to wrangle a few details from E3. Following the events of Halo 3, Master Chief and a very unstable Cortana find themselves stuck on a Forerunner planet called Requiem. Here, you'll encounter deadly new synthetic enemies called Prometheans, which are far more aggressive than the Covenant. Prometheans use highly powerful weapons that quickly deplete Master Chief's shields, and prefer an in-your-face approach to battle—a challenging contrast to the Covies' ranged tactics.

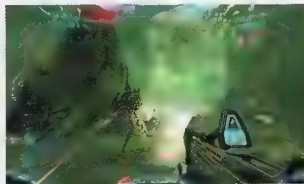
WAR GAMES \ In Halo 4's competitive multiplayer, Spartans engage in War Games: simulated battle experiences that help them prepare for live operations. You can now fully customize your loadouts for each mode, choosing your starting weapons as well as your equipment and abilities, such as the Hologram or Promethean Vision. The latter lets you see enemy heat signatures through walls.



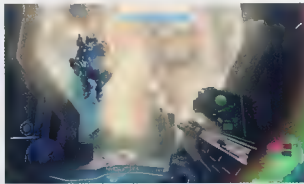
▲ You'll be playing as Master Chief once again during the single-player campaign.



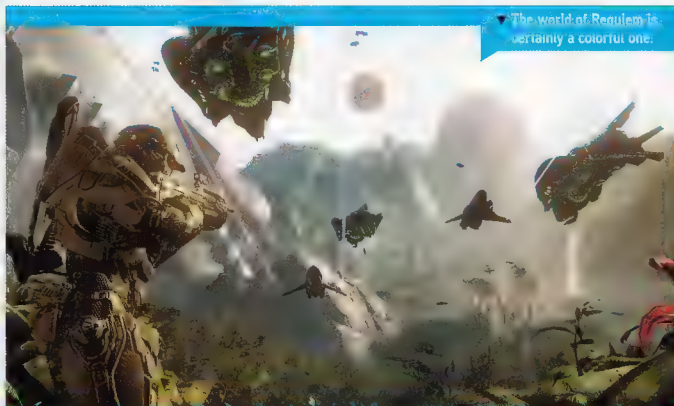
▲ Wonder which of these vehicles would win in a demolition derby?



▲ Expect to engage in some intense firefights with the super-creepy Prometheans on Requiem.



▲ Jumping high above your opponent is a good way to get shot in the groin.



▼ The world of *Regnum* is certainly a colorful one.

SPARTAN OPS \\\ One of *Halo 4*'s most interesting new features is its co-op story campaign mode, *Spartan Ops*. The two episodic brevets are there, supporting up to four players, and with *Bravo Six* keeping a relatively standard *Halo* focus on the Spartan's lowly job, instead of focusing on Master Chief's tale, this mode instead tells the story of *Bravo Six*, the most elite Spartan team. *Bravo Six* is a team of Spartans, led by the Master Chief, who are working together to recover an alien artifact while fending off groups of *Bravo Six* enemies.



Long Range
Knights use ranged weapons as well as arm-mounted blades.

HARDLIGHT SHIELD

Like the Jackal's energy shield, the Hardlight Shield is a powerful and effective defensive tool.

THE KNIGHT

A staple component of Promethean forces, Knights are downright terrifying at range and in close quarters.

XBOX 360

GAME DETAILS



HALO 4

INFO

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: 343 Industries
Platforms: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

November 6, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 16-player online and 4-player offline

GENRE

First-person shooter

SUITABLE FOR

Halophiles, alien killers

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Before it's reinvented, revisit *Halo*'s classic beginnings in *Halo: Combat Evolved Anniversary*.



WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Halo 4*.



WHAT'S GREAT

- ♥ A familiar approach to multiplayer with new tweaks
- ♥ Master Chief returns in single-player campaign
- ♥ *Spartan Ops* is an interesting approach to co-op

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT

- ✗ Minor new additions might lose novelty pretty quick

▼ Things I can't do in real life:
run from a cop, crash through a
billboard, drive a Nissan GT-R...



NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED

EA taps Criterion to reboot its race-and-chase game • Words: Andy Eddy

Don't strain your brain—you're right if you remember that *Need for Speed Most Wanted* came out in 2005. It featured a lot of full-motion video, led by model/actress Josie Maran, to pull you through the story, but emphasized some nicely crafted cops-chasing-you rides as orchestrated by EA Canada.

This year's *NFSMW* is a reboot that should excite those with a seven-year itch for another racer with a focus on police pursuit. And to up the ante, EA went with veteran studio Criterion to revamp it as a cutting-edge open-world driving game.

It might be enough to say that Criterion's version of a reboot is to take its *Need for Speed Hot Pursuit* (from 2010) and throw it in a blender with 2008's *Burnout Paradise*. And that's a good thing. *Burnout Paradise* was an open-world arcade-style game that captured driving-game fanatics for hours and hours

with plenty of things to do, while *Hot Pursuit* had miles and miles of road for cruising and chasing, but also introduced Autolog, which was like a built-in social network of players created out of your friends list. Every time you started the game, it would point out when any of your friends topped one of your times, and

EVERYTHING WAS SEAMLESS, AND THE DRIVING WAS SILKY SMOOTH...

then offer to take you right to that track, so you could try to get the best time back.

Criterion emphasized that Autolog will be back and better than ever in *NFSMW*, going so far as to call it "Autolog 2.0." You'll still be able to keep track of your friends'

accomplishments, but also personalize its tracking, so you can tell it to prioritize the list for certain friends you really want to take down. The rivalries will be big enough given the way the game plays, but with Autolog being a personal valet tracking your pals and emphasizing trash talking at every turn (which you'll even be able to monitor via the *Need for Speed* website when you're not in the game), all of that heat will be further amplified.

I got behind the wheel on *NFSMW* at E3, and I got right back into the speed and handling...and the competition in the multiplayer mode, which you can jump into without exiting the game world. Everything was seamless, the driving was silky smooth, and there was plenty of opportunity for cutthroat behavior—if you're not doing well in a race, driving the wrong way to take out your friends is always an option. October 30 can't come soon enough for me. ☺

I'M HERE ON SKID ROW

You shopped for a souped-up ride. Now you have to show your skills...

Don't Cop! ...but the police have you outmaneuvered. Who'll come out ahead?

MEET GRINDER

Burnout Paradise's Freeburn Challenges have yielded to NFSMW's Free Drive. Get together with others—from within your game—and challenges are doled out, which can be a race or other objective (such as the longest jump off a particular ramp). Complete one and a new challenge pops up.



▼ As you'd expect, you'll be able to get behind the wheels of cool, licensed vehicles...and fly.



BURNED OUT ON BURNOUT? ▼

If you're tired of the Burnout series—particularly the last main release, Burnout Paradise—you should probably skip NFSMW, because they have many common elements: takedowns, billboard and gate crashing, and, of course, lots of fast-paced racing.

PS3 XBOX 360 PC

GAME DETAILS



NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED

INFO

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Criterion
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

RELEASE DATE

October 30, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 12-player online

GENRE

Racing

SUITABLE FOR

Need for Speed vets,
Burnout addicts

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



Try the game that's essentially NFSMW's spiritual predecessor, Burnout Paradise.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for Need for Speed Most Wanted.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Criterion offers some of the best driving anywhere
- ♥ Multiplayer doesn't require dropping out to a lobby

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Why didn't they just call it Burnout Paradise 2?
- ✗ Hope there's nothing important going on in November

METAL GEAR RISING: REVENGEANCE

Steel replaces stealth in Platinum Games' Raiden spin-off • Words: Ryan Taljionick

From androgynous pretty-boy to ultra-rad cyborg ninja, Raiden's made quite the transformation since his controversial role as the main playable character in 2001's *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*. Honestly, I've been itching to see more of his slice-and-dice swordplay in action ever since that scene in *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots*—you know, the one where he fights Vamp and a dozen robotic Gekkos breakdance-style while holding his sword with his feet. No big deal.

Now Raiden has his second shot at stardom with *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*, a game that has gone through a transformation almost as drastic as its slash-happy hero since switching hands from Kojima Productions to renowned action-game developer Platinum Games. Indeed, *Revengeance* is all about adrenaline-pumping combat, replacing the franchise's signature stealth with intense, high-speed swordfights.

I'll admit I was nervous this non-canon spin-off would do more to ruin the *Metal Gear* name than help it.

minutes of slashing humanoid robots into itty-bitty pieces, I had a hard time walking away from my demo.

Playing Raiden made me feel like I was controlling an unstoppable cyborg. His katana cuts through just about everything—much of the environment included—and his flashy combos marry the stylish combat of Platinum's *Bayonetta* with the pure speed of *Vanquish*. Best of all, the wild sword-swinging animations are just as fun to exercise as they are to watch. Sure, Raiden is no Solid Snake—but then again, Solid Snake is no Raiden, either. ☺



REVENGEANCE IS ALL ABOUT ADRENALINE-PUMPING COMBAT



▼ The impressive cutting technology in *Revengeance* lets you slice at any angle.

BLADE MODE \\\ Entering Blade Mode slows things down, giving you ample time to precisely tune your blade attacks to turn bad guys into filet-o'-foes. The right analog stick controls Raiden's sword—just flick it in whatever direction you like, causing him to swing in congruence with your input. Of course, you can always rely on stylish combos via the face buttons if you prefer a button-mashing approach to battle.



▲ Expect to face off against a variety of enemies, including the Gekko from *Guns of the Patriots*.



▲ Use Blade Mode to slice this thing's legs and make quick work of it.



CUT. IT. OUT. \\\



Enemies aren't the only things Raiden can cut. Even chunks of the environment can be diced into pieces. Railings, stone pillars, gates—almost anything that stands in your way can be forcibly removed with a few quick slashes of your sword.

PS3 XBOX 360

GAME DETAILS



METAL GEAR RISING: REVENGEANCE

INFO

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Platinum Games
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

February 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

Action

SUITABLE FOR

Ninja wannabes, sword obsessives

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



Bayonetta is a testament to Platinum's action expertise.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Super-fast swordplay
- ♥ You cut just about anything at any angle

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ A huge departure from traditional *Metal Gear* gameplay



PS VITA

ASSASSIN'S CREED III
LIBERATION

INFO

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft
Platforms: PS Vita

RELEASE DATE

October 30, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Yes, format TBD

GENRE

Action-adventure

SUITABLE FOR

Amateur assassins, history
nerds, voodoo queens

NOT OUT YET?
PLAY THIS!

*Uncharted: Golden
Abyss* also features
fun parkour on Vita.



GAME DETAILS



FIRST LOOK

ASSASSIN'S CREED III
LIBERATION

A lady of the fight • Words: Ryan Telford

You know, there aren't that many games with a strong female lead character. Sure, *Metroid's* Samus, *Portal's* Chell, and *Faith of Mirror's Edge* are all incredible exceptions, but think about it: Even when games do feature women as primary heroes, they're more often presented as impossibly proportioned Barbie dolls than full-fledged human beings.

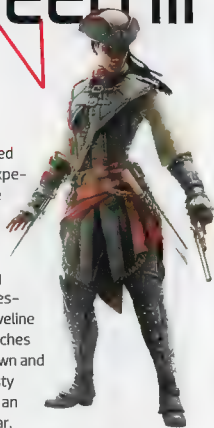
Not so in *Assassin's Creed III Liberation* for PlayStation Vita, a separate but parallel adventure to its console cousin. Aveline—the first female protagonist in the series—is easily just as capable as Connor, her male counterpart, using a deadly combination of cunning, parkour skills, and hidden blade brutality to effectively stalk and assassinate her prey. She even has a variety of unique weaponry at her disposal, including a blowpipe that shoots poison darts, perfect for unassumingly eliminating opponents from afar.

Perhaps the most noticeable thing about *Liberation* is how beautifully it mimics the footage I've seen of *Assassin's Creed III*. From the 18th century setting (*Liberation* is based in New Orleans during the Louisiana Rebellion) to its open frontier gameplay sequences, you can

expect a fully realized *Assassin's Creed* experience unique to the handheld system.

Even new features—such as tree running and moving executions—are present here, as I saw Aveline hop along tree branches before dropping down and introducing her trusty pistol to the face of an unfortunate Templar.

Naturally, *Liberation* also makes use of the Vita's touch functionality. After initiating a battle, you can pause the game and "tap" enemies on the screen to mark them for execution. Upon resuming the action, Aveline will automatically take down those hostiles, allowing you to sit back, relax, and watch the bloody display without pressing another button. This is an optional feature, so those who prefer to participate in the bloodbath can—and why wouldn't you? Aveline's a force to be reckoned with.

WANT MORE?
SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your
smartphone to watch the
official trailer for *Assassin's
Creed III Liberation*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Playing as a fascinating new female assassin
- ♥ A full-fledged portable *Assassin's Creed*

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Will touch controls feel intrusive and forced?



◀ SNEAK PEEK

Aveline can peek around cover to observe an area without giving away her location. Need to stealthily take down a target? Try using the blowpipe from the shadows.



▲ Oh yeah, muskets existed in the late 18th century. Avoiding bullets can prove trickier than swords.



▲ Aveline can use buildings and trees to stay above her targets without getting spotted.

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character and enjoy complete customization as you embark on a heroic quest.



02 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 13

Put your golf skills to the test as you walk some of the world's most immaculate courses while competing for the top prize in *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13*. You'll be able to drive, chip and putt on the grass of Augusta National Golf Club—home of The Masters. Do you have



what it takes to dominate and earn the famous Green Jacket?



03 STREET FIGHTER X TEKKEN

A strange object called Pandora has been found. Beyond human comprehension, the object emits a powerful response when it detects violent confrontations, like those between your favorite *Street Fighter* and *Tekken* characters. Get ready for an all-new fight when series favorites take



the stage in a two-vs.-two tag team-based fighting game like no other.



04 SKYLANDERS STARTER PACK

With this starter pack for *Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure*, you'll receive everything you need to begin your adventure. Featuring three unique Skylanders Character Interaction Figures—Spyro, Gill Grunt, and Trigger Happy—as well as a Portal of Power to bring them



instantly to life, this kit is a fantastic deal at \$15 off the regular price.



05 TERA

Tera combines the depth of an MMO with the intensity and gratification of an action game. Choose from seven races and eight classes. Explore the dynamic battle system as you try to protect the lands from marauding monsters, underworld dwellers, and evil scheming gods who threaten to end the world for everyone.



06 PRE-OWNED FABLE III

Five decades have passed, and the distant land of Albion is in peril. Called upon to rally and fight alongside your people in *Fable III*, you must choose between the greater good or personal gain. Embark on a new quest where the race for the crown is only the beginning of a spectacular journey. How will you let your fable play out? Will you rebel and fight, rise to power as a tyrant, or become the greatest leader that ever lived?



07 ANY PRE-OWNED GAME \$9.99-\$19.99

Take advantage of Best Buy's great new trade-in program and pick up a pre-owned game at an even lower price than before. Whether you're catching up on an older classic like *Red Dead Redemption* or just want the best deal possible on the latest, biggest release, this coupon is your new best friend: an instant \$5 off any pre-owned game priced \$9.99-\$19.99. What are you waiting for? Don't delay. Complete your collection today!



08 TURTLE BEACH PX3 WIRELESS HEADSET

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"UNLIKE ANYTHING WE'VE EVER SEEN ON THE XBOX 360..."

-TEAM XBOX

"...A LOT MORE THAN JUST
SAVVY TRADING."

-IGN

"THE WORLD - OR AT LEAST
THE CARIBBEAN - IS YOURS!"

-GameSpot

Port Royale 3

Pirates & Merchants

Over
1 million copies
of the Port Royale
series sold world
wide!



SEPTEMBER 2007

TEEN



Alcohol and Tobacco Reference
Mild Blood
Mild Language
Mild Violence

ESRB CONTENT RATING

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CRYSIS 3

It's a jungle out there

Words: Mali Cabral

The first thing to hit me during my *Crysis 3* hands-on demo isn't a plasma blast from the series' signature Cephalopod baddies, but the game's striking visual presentation. No stranger to drop-ping jaws with its polygon-pushing prowess, developer Crytek has set the latest installment of its sandbox first-person shooter in a stunningly detailed urban rainforest.

With an unnerving vision of a future-fiction New York City, the game sees the iconic metropolis consumed by an aggressive Mother Nature. Vines hold vice grips on vehicles, swamplands replace streets, and trees supplant once-impressive

buildings. Of course, behind the Nanosuit of vengeance-seeking protagonist Prophet, I wasn't there to ogle the foliage-choked city like a tourist. Returning corrupt corporation C.E.L.L. was up to no good, and teaching it some manners trumped sightseeing.

Arming Prophet's compound bow, I approached a small army of patrolling soldiers in a stealthy manner; as I soon discovered, coupling the stringed weapon with the Nanosuit's cloaking camouflage perfectly complements *Crysis 3*'s predatory gameplay focus. Sure, going in guns blazing was an option, but surgically planting razor-sharp projectiles into the heads of

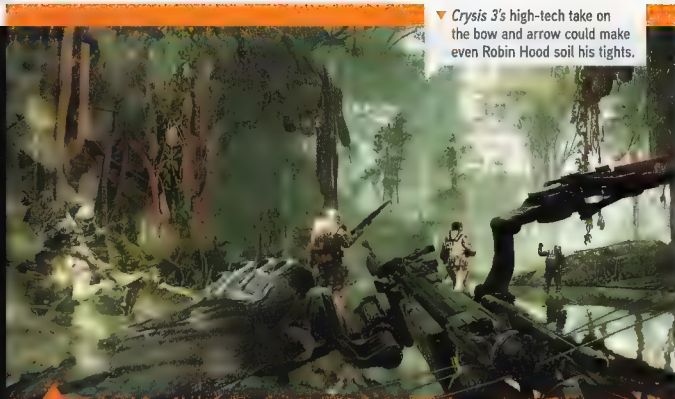
clueless meatbags was more rewarding. It didn't hurt that I could arm the unassuming death-dealer with different kinds of arrows: whether looking to cook C.E.L.L. soldiers extra crispy or light up their bodies with coursing electric bolts, there are specialized ammo types for the job.

Supported by its absorbing setting, *Crysis 3*'s arrow-flinging action offers a refreshing break from the *Call of Duty* clones clogging the market. Based on my brief time behind the bow, I can't wait to revisit the Big Apple's rotting core when *Crysis 3* lands—like a termite-tipped projectile to the chest—early next year. **A**

Fresh Foe
Fire-spitting Scorchers aren't happy to see Prophet alive.

Vine Suit
The Nanosuit can now hack enemy tech and use alien weaponry.

I WASN'T THERE TO OGLE
THE FOLIAGE-CHOKED CITY
LIKE A TOURIST



▼ *Crysis 3's* high-tech take on the bow and arrow could make even Robin Hood soil his tights.

NO BOW, NO PROBLEM \\\ While my demo focused on Prophet's archery skills, those seeking less, er, subtle means to silencing enemies have plenty of bullet-spraying options. Itchier trigger fingers can soothe themselves behind a variety of more traditional enemy-eviscerating guns, such as the 500-rounds-per-second Typhoon. Additionally, Prophet can hack enemy tech, turning enemy turrets against their own team.

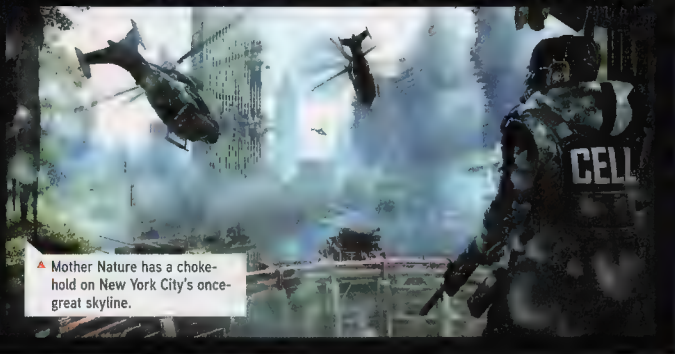
THE URBAN JUNGLE AWAITS



▲ Different ammo types make the bow a well-rounded choice for killing silently or violently.



▲ *Crysis 3's* setting is like the lovechild of the original *Crysis's* tropical island and its sequel's urban jungle.



▲ Mother Nature has a chokehold on New York City's once-great skyline.

GAMEDETAILS 12

PS3 XBOX360 PC



CRYSIS 3

INFO

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Crytek
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

RELEASE DATE

February 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

TBD

GENRE

First-person shooter

SUITABLE FOR

Anyone interested in sandbox shooters, archery enthusiasts, lovers of gorgeous graphics

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



Far Cry 2 may not have a Nanosuit, but it's a great open-world FPS alternative.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Crysis 3*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Visuals look nearly next-gen
- ♥ Dynamic, emergent combat
- ♥ Playing silent and sneaking behind the bow



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Will those let down by *Crysis 2* return to the jungle?

INJUSTICE: GODS AMONG US

Batman, Superman, and other DC characters play Fight Club • Words: Andy Eddy

Comics are all about conflicts between good and evil, and evil wins just often enough that the outcome is never a sure thing. That anticipation and anxiety makes the premise of *Injustice: Gods Among Us* so cool.

Injustice is a versus fighter that focuses on battles between superheroes and villains from the DC Comics universe. There's still a ton to be revealed about the game, including most of its character list, as well as how a character like Superman will be able to sustain damage. (Ed Boon—co-creator of the *Mortal Kombat* franchise and the creative director at NetherRealm Studios, which is crafting *Injustice*—says that an extensive story will explain all of that.)

I've had two recent *Injustice* demos that clued me in on what NetherRealm means when it says that the game will feature "blockbuster" battles. Character moves are powerful and destructive, and there'll be loads of environmental damage, meaning both to the environment and from the environment. There was also a broad

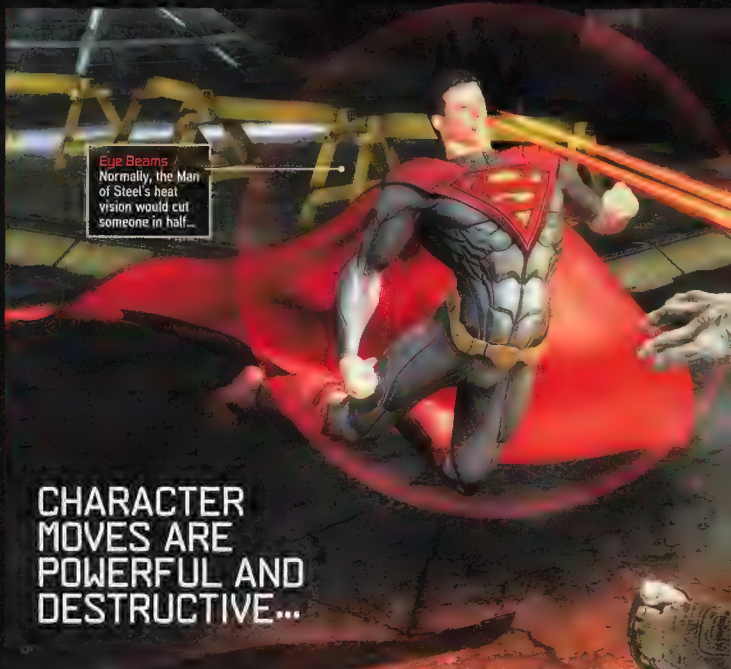
variety of moves among the characters we saw, which seem to be grouped in RPG-like classes. Wonder Woman was described as a "power" character, while Batman is a "gadget" fighter... which left me wondering how many others there are and how they'll cause fights to vary.

One battle had a Batman punch sending Wonder Woman diagonally through walls and ceilings, finally dropping her in a different part of the city. Later in the same fight, Batman sent her horizontally through the building, occasionally clanging forcefully (and hysterically) into some pipes along the way.

But another battle in the Batcave showed the force of a punch causing some grenades on a Batsuit hanging in the background to fall to the floor—and whichever character got to them first could use them. Having fights rely on more than fists, kicks, and combos was an unexpected twist. And with an indistinct "2013" release date, there's time for NetherRealm to wring many more secrets from its superpowered carnage. **B**

Eye Beams
Normally, the Man of Steel's heat vision would cut someone in half...

CHARACTER
MOVES ARE
POWERFUL AND
DESTRUCTIVE...





BATTLE ROYALE--WITH CHEESE

01 NO WONDER

Wonder Woman lucked out here—Solomon Grundy's not bashing her with the headstone he whips out during his macabre super move.

02 AWW, SHOOT!

If this were a typical Wild West duel, Harley Quinn would probably draw on Batman before the count of three. She has no shame...



SUPERMAN ISN'T THE ONLY "SUPER" HERE

At the demo I had before E3, we were told that each character has a super move that they can unleash during battle. In the trailer (scan the QR code to the right), you'll see Superman's: He slugs his foe through the ceiling and out of Earth's atmosphere, then whack-a-moles them back down. Flash's super has him running around the globe, then drilling his adversary from the other side. They're over-the-top indignities you'll be able to drop on your opponent—sort of like *Mortal Kombat*'s fatalities.



Heavy fight, but here it sends Solomon Grundy flying across the level with oomph.

PS3 XBOX 360 Wii U

GAME DETAILS 12



INJUSTICE: GODS AMONG US

INFO

Publisher: Warner Bros.
Interactive Entertainment
Developer: NetherRealm Studios
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii U

RELEASE DATE

2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 2-player online or local

GENRE

Fighting

SUITABLE FOR

Comics and fighting-game nuts

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



You have to figure that NetherRealm's *Mortal Kombat* reboot should be a great warm-up.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Injustice: Gods Among Us*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Over-the-top bragging action with a great cast
- ♥ Incredibly large arenas

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ After you've seen a super move a few times, its novelty could very well wear off
- ✖ The story had better be good or fans will pitch a fit



PS VITA



GAME DETAILS



SOUND SHAPES

INFO

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: Queasy Games
Platforms: PS Vita

RELEASE DATE

August 7, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

Music / Platformer

SUITABLE FOR

DIY gamers and
DIY musicians alike

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

With **BIT.TRIP Complete** offers a similarly retro feel in a collection of six great rhythm games.

WANT MORE?
SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Sound Shapes*.

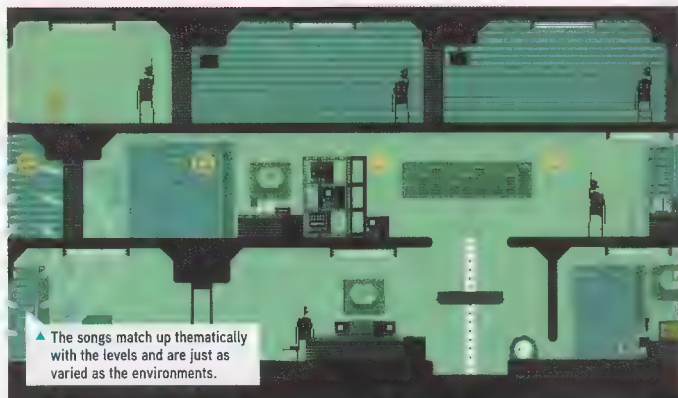


WHAT'S GREAT

- ♥ Awesome songs accompany stylish levels
- ♥ Easy-to-use level creation system

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT

- ✖ Occasionally finicky platforming controls
- ✖ Realizing you have no rhythm



▲ The songs match up thematically with the levels and are just as varied as the environments.

SOUND SHAPES

Your own personal DJ platform(er) • Words: Taylor Cocke

We've all fallen in love with a game's soundtrack before, but imagine the soundtrack is the game and the game is the soundtrack. You've now taken your first step towards understanding *Sound Shapes*, one of the PlayStation Vita's most original offerings so far, and easily the most unique interactive music experience I've played in some time.

Here's the concept: As you make your way through this 2D platformer, everything you touch adds a note to the soundtrack. With each collectible, surface, and enemy, the music becomes more and more robust until it builds up to a musical climax. You're not only making your way through a level, but you're also effectively playing a song.

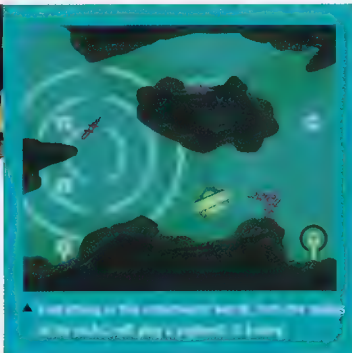
If you'd rather create music than simply play it, the powerful level editor is for you. Pick an item and a note for that item to play, then put it on the grid system using the Vita's dual touch inputs. As you work, the game constantly provides a preview of how the level will sound, so you can tweak it as you go. Even for someone with little to no musical talent, the game's surprisingly easy to wrap your head around. I predict that well after its original levels are played out, folks will still be inventing and sharing amazing stuff. User-generated content could potentially make *Sound Shapes* playable forever.

Hopefully, *Sound Shapes* is like a great album—the more you play it, the more you love it and look forward to experiencing it again. ☺



PROFESSIONAL HELP \\\

Considering they're game-makers first and music-makers second, the developers of *Sound Shapes* have crafted some remarkably catchy melodies. For a master's touch, however, they've brought in popular house artist deadmau5, who lends his skills to a custom level.



▲ Not sitting in the editor? Well, with the new level editor, you can play a custom level.

LITTLEBIGPLANET KARTING

Where speeding and scrapbooking collide Words: Charlie Barratt

Sonic, Pac-Man, Frogger, even the majestic chocobo...at some sad point in their existence, every beloved gaming mascot is subjected to a kart racer, and none are ever as good as Mario Kart. Why should one starring PlayStation icon Sackboy and his customizable craft-doll friends turn out any better? Because of that crucial word: customizable. Everything from the drivers and cars to the tracks and weapons in *LittleBigPlanet Karting* can be tweaked, personalized, or assembled from scratch, and that's what makes this latest entry in an otherwise tired genre actually worth anticipating.

Sure, you could dive right into the game with a default character and vehicle, but the different options for costumes and parts are so ridiculously extensive that you'll more likely end up making your very own tie-dyed lizard with blueberries for eyes driving a monster truck with acorns for wheels. Yes, the game ships with raceways designed by the developers, but spend a few hours in the track editor (the very same one they used) and the location of each curve,

boost ramp, grappling point, shortcut, and giant dinosaur shooting electricity from its mouth (no, really) is up to you. Fan of the boxing glove power-up? Its traits—super speed and invincibility—can be removed or reprogrammed to a different item altogether. Like a cupcake.

Of course, all the open-source whimsy in the world won't matter if the basic driving mechanics aren't fun, and here *LittleBigPlanet* smartly sticks to the Mario Kart formula: accelerating, drifting, drift boosting, and weapon management each felt comfortably familiar during my hands-on time. Only now, I could change anything and everything else around them. **C**

▼ The grapple hook helps you clear big jumps and sometimes leads to secret shortcuts.



► Cardboard box or tin can: We may finally know which is faster.

DUDE, THAT'S MY CAR?

LittleBigPlanet's miniature universe inspires some amazingly strange vehicles. Just a few of my favorites so far: an egg carton, a flower pot, a toy aluminum blimp, a bento box, a TV remote, a UFO carved out of an orange, a fungi-covered stick, and a PS3 controller.

GAMEDETAILS 12



LITTLEBIGPLANET KARTING

INFO

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: United Front Games
Platforms: PS3

RELEASE DATE

TBD 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 8-player online and 4-player offline

GENRE

Racing

SUITABLE FOR

Speed freaks, control freaks, yarn freaks

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



ModNation Racers is from the same creative team, and just as generous with editing tools.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *LittleBigPlanet Karting*.



WHAT'S GREAT

- ♥ Deep level of customization guarantees this isn't just another copycat
- ♥ Everything's so tiny and adorable!

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT

- ✗ Framerate was choppy during my demo, but should be fixed for release



Deadly Creatures
XCOM's many enemies are as varied as they are dangerous.

Aerial Attack
The Archangel's jetpack lets him fly out of reach of melee opponents.

XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN

We are not alone in the universe, and that's absolutely terrifying • Words: Hollander Cooper

Alien shooters are a dime a dozen—when bug-eyed extraterrestrials attack, just whip out your laser rifle, put on your battle armor, and start first-person blasting your way through spaceships until you take down their leader. That's not the case with *XCOM: Enemy Unknown*, a turn-based strategy game that brings the alien invasion to 1950s Earth in a way that makes most FPSs look braindead by comparison. Though past *XCOM* titles have been complicated and often unapproachable, *Enemy Unknown* from Firaxis Games (creators of *Civilization*) puts accessibility first, with a streamlined interface that makes the series' trademark complexity remarkably easy to learn. Within minutes I was commanding my squad against the alien terror and taking cover behind environmental objects as my team repelled attacks.

This reworked interface doesn't lead to simplified gameplay, though. *Enemy Unknown* is a deep, strategic game that

rewards you for using your brain instead of attempting to go in all brawn—even in the beginning levels.

The various departments of the *XCOM* organization let you upgrade soldiers and units—as long as they survive battles. There's no guarantee they will. Death is permanent in *Enemy Unknown*, meaning upgraded soldiers stay dead if you aren't careful. You could potentially level up one soldier really high, only to lose that character forever.

This game doesn't shy away from brutality, nor does it ease up on forcing you to make tough decisions—I was asked to support a battle in either the U.S. or China. The kicker was, I was only given time to assist one nation. Whichever I decided to help would support the war effort more, while the neglected country would feel less charitable when it came to funding my organization. How will this play out in the full game? I'm really looking forward to finding out later this year. ☺

BATTLEFIELD TECH

Units can be outfitted and customized with upgraded items as the game progresses, but these upgrades need to be researched first. In order to do this, you will need to capture alien technology, which can then be reverse-engineered to create high-tech armaments. *XCOM* takes the resource-management side of alien warfare very seriously, and finite resources means you'll often have to selectively choose your upgrades.





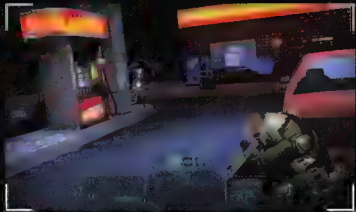
▼ Cover is key to survival in *Enemy Unknown*.

**TAKE COVER! ** Moving between cover is even more important in *Enemy Unknown* than it is in traditional shooters. Enemies will focus on taking down vulnerable soldiers first, and death is permanent, so it's not like you can run over and inject them with adrenaline to get them back on their feet. It's crucial that you consider every move you make: Spend too much time in the open and you'll never make it to the next round.



PICK YOUR POISON \\\

Several different types of soldiers were shown off at the demo besides the typical grunt. The Archangel (pictured above) uses a jetpack to fly above the battlefield, and the Ghost can sneak around using stealth. Even more exciting was the PSI Trooper—not every unit has the ability to become a PSI Trooper, but those who do gain the ability to mind-control enemies and pit xenomorph against xenomorph.



▲ I didn't test it, but odds are that blasting the gas pump will blow the alien to bits.

PS3 XBOX360 PC

GAMEDetails

HANDS-ON



XCOM: ENEMY UNKNOWN

INFO

Publisher: 2K Games
Developer: Firaxis Games
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

RELEASE DATE

October 9, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

Turn-based strategy

SUITABLE FOR

E.T. blasters with quick intelligence, not just quick triggers

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



Valkyria Chronicles features similar tactical gameplay, even if it doesn't star aliens.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *XCOM: Enemy Unknown*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ The *XCOM* series is back, and no compromises to casual console players were made
- ♥ It has a complexity not usually found in modern shooters

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ The complexity will be a turn-off for some



XBOX 360



FABLE: THE JOURNEY

INFO

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Lionhead Studios
Platforms: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

October 9, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

Adventure

SUITABLE FOR

Would-be Potters who want to hold magic in their hands

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



If you own a PlayStation Move, try *Sorcery for this type of magical motion control.*

WANT MORE?
SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Fable: The Journey*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Wonderful graphics that bring Albion to life
- ♥ The focus on precise magical spells means no fatigue from flailing

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Linearity will definitely be a turnoff to some
- ✖ Occasionally gimmicky segments could get tiring



GAME DETAILS



FABLE: THE JOURNEY

Explore Albion in first-person with the power of Kinect • Words: Hollander Cooper

Outside of the Will's success, motion controls have struggled to break into the mainstream, with most people opting to enjoy their games controller-in-hand and believing that Kinect is just for party compilations. *Fable: The Journey* looks to break this stigma by presenting you with the complete package: a full narrative experience that lives up to the series pedigree and puts the power of magic directly in their hands.

Though some areas of *The Journey* required me to interact with the world in first-person simply to justify the motion-focus, others—including combat—were a blast thanks to the Kinect. Raising my right hand caused my on-screen fist to generate lightning that I could toss towards enemies with the flick of my wrist. Shaking it or saying “fireball!” changed the electricity to fire, allowing for different elemental attacks for different types of enemies.

My left hand got in on the action, too, enabling me to lasso enemies with an invisible tether and then either hold them in place or tear them apart. It took some getting used to, but before long I was slinging spells like a champ, destroying dastardly demons with powerful elemental blasts and tearing apart skeletons limb from limb. Literally—I could tear off the arms and even the heads of skeletons, causing the undead monsters to stumble around the battlefield like...well, skeletons with their heads cut off. Though I went in skeptical, I left interested, and anxious to see what the full journey will be like this October. ☺



▲ Tossing spells took getting used to, but once I had it under control I felt incredibly powerful.

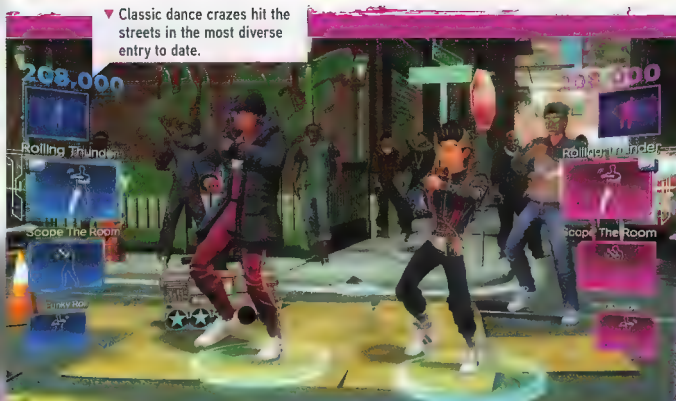


▲ Controlling a speeding wagon in first-person by rearing to one side or another felt intuitive.

IT'S NOT THE
DESTINATION \\\

Avoiding that red barrel is probably a good idea.

▼ Classic dance crazes hit the streets in the most diverse entry to date.



DANCE CENTRAL 3

Grooving through the decades • Words: Andrew Hayward

Kinect's most reliably enjoyable franchise returns this fall with *Dance Central 3*, which keeps the motion-tracking moves of previous entries while enhancing the multiplayer approach, adding new free-form dance options, and broadening the scope of the track listing.

As in the past, Harmonix's latest lets you match the onscreen maneuvers using Kinect, though *Dance Central 3* gets an added shot of authenticity via the help of Usher, who helped choreograph the moves to his two featured songs, "Scream" and "OMG (ft. Will.I.am)." Modern jams are only part of the equation, however, as classic tracks, such as Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive" and Van McCoy's "The Hustle," are also included amidst the 40+ on-disc tracks, along with iconic dance crazes from the past four decades. And all of the previous games' tracks and DLC can be imported, too.

In fact, *Dance Central 3*'s campaign focuses heavily on past hits and moves,

with a storyline that features dance agents traveling through time. Greater song variety and goofy narrative cues are only part of the enhanced experience here, though, as Harmonix says that it's putting a lot of focus on delivering more differentiation between routines on varying difficulty levels. While the easiest moves remain accessible, the challenge on the opposite end is amped up to deliver the trickiest routines seen to date.

The new Crew Throwdown party mode (detailed below) packs in traditional dance battles and fresh minigames for up to eight players, but it's not simply about following a script. The Keep the Beat minigame rewards on-the-fly steps with higher scores, while Make Your Move mimics H.O.R.S.E. by letting each player perform an original move and have the opponent try to match it. Simply copying the prompts is no longer enough to dominate your friends, and paired with the fresh tunes and play modes, *Dance Central 3* looks like the best mix yet. **C**

REP YOUR CREW

The all-new Crew Throwdown mode lets up to eight local players split into rival troupes for alternating one-on-one showdowns spanning both performances and minigames. Upon forming, the crews take amusing group photos, plus each individual battle begins with a Kinect-tracked high-five. Hey, even rivals have to keep it classy!



▲ Can your crew amass the most points? Only one way to find out!

GAME DETAILS



DANCE CENTRAL 3

INFO

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Harmonix
Platforms: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

Fall 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 2-player offline

GENRE

Dance

SUITABLE FOR

Kinect owners who have (or want) rhythm

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



Dance Central 2 is Kinect's best current offering in the genre, and will get you moving.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Dance Central 3*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Crew Throwdown amps up party play
- ♥ Diverse new soundtrack that teaches past dance crazes
- ♥ More free-form dance options



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Will annual sequels burn players out on the series?
- ✗ Still no online multiplayer



FIFA 13

A facelift for The Beautiful Game • Words: Sterling McGarvey

Building a new game from scratch is no small feat, and while FIFA 12 will be remembered as one of the finest soccer games of this console generation, FIFA 13 looks to refine the formula in numerous avenues.

Within 30 seconds of the first kick, it's impossible to ignore the differences in gameplay. Thanks to refinements to player first touches, it's more imperative to work hard to trap a pass and distribute carefully—a sloppy pass or a bad touch will hand the ball right back to the opposition. For defenders, tweaks to tactical defense allow for more variance in how you can cut off passing options. With this new feature, the dynamic nature of FIFA 13's gameplay feels as chaotic and unpredictable as the real thing.

Plus, big defenders can now throw themselves between an attacker and the ball more often, because FIFA 13 accurately accounts for the physical differences between larger men like Kompany or Chiellini. You can put more pressure on attackers, too, although they'll be likelier to draw a foul (and a yellow card) if you button-mash too much.

Teammate AI is even smarter than before. Yes, we hear that from EA Sports every year, but there's an immediately visible improvement as you'll notice teammates slowing their runs on goal to stay onside, or poking around defenders looking for enough space to start a good run on goal. EA promises that AI teammates will "think two steps ahead" and know where they

to be, rather than snapping into play when the ball is close to them. That also extends to defensive intelligence, as I felt more comfortable sending a teammate to apply pressure on a ball carrier as I "bumped" Leo Messi and messed up his run.

EA's goals of refining FIFA 12's excellent gameplay seem to be exceptionally ambitious, but fully within reach. From what I've played, there's plenty in store for next season. ☺

Lionel Messi
For the first time, Lionel Messi will grace the cover of a core FIFA game with FIFA 13.

AS CHAOTIC AND
UNPREDICTABLE
AS THE REAL
THING



EVERYTHING CAN CHANGE IN SECONDS

Beta looks will get a new look, thanks to limited free kicks. Now you can use up labor on the back, three-man strategy, and a variety of other moves to get the ball where you want it. However, it's a bigger team who can win the game. You have far more options on defense in the wall, too, such as adding more men, and being able to help multiple times as needed.



TEAMPLAY



MORE CONTROL IN YOUR HANDS

Dribbling and ball control also get a new degree of precision, as FIFA 13 borrows small amounts of flourish from FIFA Street's Panna system. It's easier to roll the ball on your feet skillfully, then burst into a run on goal, not unlike Messi's rapid bolts at goal. Details are still scant on online gameplay modes, but fortunately, all stats from EA Sports Football Club will carry over into FIFA 13, and depending on your level, your XP will unlock various goods.



With first touch tweaks, your players will have more control and retain the ball better than before.



With teammate runs, your AI partners will know how to weave themselves around defensive lines.

GAME DETAILS 12



FIFA 13

INFO

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Canada
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii U, PC

RELEASE DATE

Fall 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 22-player online,
4-player offline (expected)

GENRE

Sports

SUITABLE FOR

Control freaks, people who sleep in Messi pajamas

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!



Prime for FIFA 13 by pumping up your EA Sports Football Club stats with FIFA Street.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for FIFA 13.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ An immediately detectable improvement on FIFA 12
- ♥ First touch tweaks mean a more cautious, tactical game

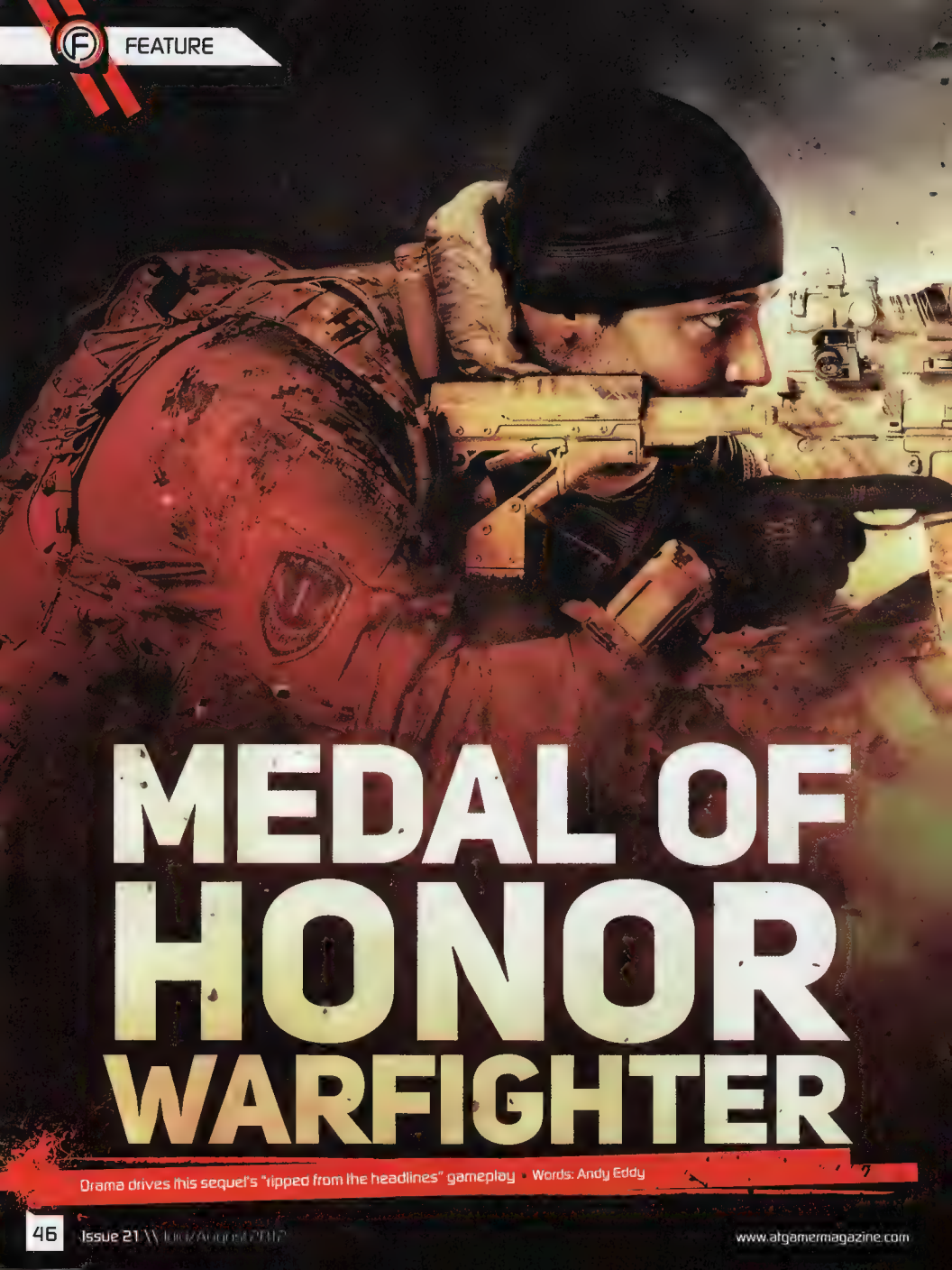


WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ If you didn't like FIFA 12's revamp, you'll have issues
- ✗ Will AI be smart enough to help you against humans online?



FEATURE



MEDAL OF HONOR WARFIGHTER

Drama drives this sequel's "lipped from the headlines" gameplay • Words: Andy Eddy



by James Van Der Beek

Does it feel like something I didn't see? The normal incessant push by the developers to tell me how incredibly

awesome Medal of Honor Warfighter will be.

Oh, Danger Close is certainly excited about MoHW, make no mistake about that. I just didn't feel like I was hearing a practiced pitch about how cool the game is, so often a part of demos. Instead, what I got was a genuine sense of how proud the creators are about what MoHW stands for and what it means to them: It's a tribute to the Tier 1 Operators around the world who fight for their countries and make incredible sacrifices—not only of life and limb, but also of family.

This is all made obvious when I'm shown an unfinished trailer that players will see at the start of the game. In it, we don't see

any dramatic music. It's a black and white, grainy, home-movie style video that shows a soldier, a woman, and his wife, who's clearly had enough of him being away from her and their daughter. It sets a different tone than we're used to in videogames, but it's an accurate presentation given that MoHW's story was written by actual Tier 1 Operators—defined as a country's most elite special-force soldiers—serving overseas.

Rest assured, there'll still be plenty of FPS excitement in the campaign, which offers a series of missions that should resonate with anyone who watches the news: a boat taken over by Somali pirates, an attack at a European train station, and an increased use of PETN (the explosive used by the failed "underwear bomber" and in printer cartridges that were discovered on a plane before they could be detonated). The elite Tier 1 Operators will be sent wherever their expertise is needed, with their ultimate goal being to shut down a growing PETN distribution network.

While we do have a few cinematic cutscenes, they're not the focus of the game. Instead, it's a "fire team" of four players who coordinate their actions and respawn back on their partner's "six" if they die, and also share health and ammo when in close proximity. After I played a few matches, I could see how this "game within a game" will enhance the whole multiplayer experience.

While Danger Close is building MoHW to be a strong, challenging shooter, the developer is surely going for a different vibe with the story—one that "humanizes" these soldiers.

"I think people are going to be very surprised at not only the opening cinematic bits, but by what follows," says executive producer Greg Goodrich. "It's not what you expect when you press play, that's for sure. But I think it's going to be really powerful and impactful to those who pay attention, because it's very identifiable. [Operators] are highly trained warriors, but they're going through the same things as you and I." 



READY...AIM...LICENSE!

Just as a sports game goes for authenticity by licensing league rosters, EA is aiming for weapon authenticity in *MoHW* by setting up licensing deals with gun makers—and it claims it's the only game publisher pursuing that level of realism. When you unlock an operator, you also get his weapons, and with EA's licensing deal, those weapons will match what a real-life operator uses. With 72 operators available to unlock through the whole game, you'll have a lot of time to discover your favorite firearms.

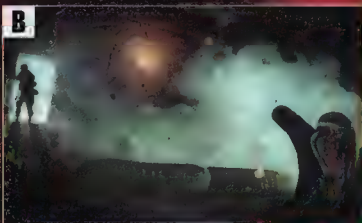


A TALE OF TWO DOORS

A Always check the door's knob before you waste the explosives to blast it off its hinges. Of course, some of a shooter's most anxious moments are right as a door is being breached, because you know it's likely there'll be a number of bad guys on the other side—and they'll only be momentarily stunned by your explosive entrance.



B Let's take a look at the other side of that equation from another part of the game. Here, we have a few people sharing a "What the..." moment as door fragments and lead start flying. I don't have to tell you that it's much better to be the guy at the left side of this picture than the ones he's facing—and about to engage with bullets.



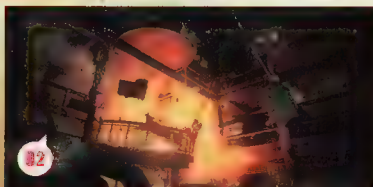
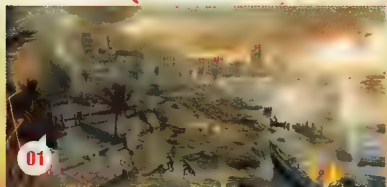
BENEFITS PACKAGE

MoHW offers you some short-term aids you can call up during multiplayer. For instance, one class can switch out normal ammo for a clip that enables 20% higher damage, though with a trade-off of lower accuracy.



IT'S A TRIBUTE TO THE
TIER 1 OPERATORS WHO
FIGHT FOR THEIR COUNTRIES

THE REALITIES OF WAR ARE ABSOLUTELY HORRIFYING



01 HIT-THE BEACH

Somalia has a burgeoning maritime trade, though it's built upon taking other people's boats. These Tier 1 operators don't like that.

02 COUCH POTATO

Usually, hanging out on the sofa (maybe playing some games) is a great pastime—but not if the room blows up.



▼ You can take advantage of cover, but just like you, it won't last long if it's taking shots.

**MISSIONS SHOULD
RESONATE WITH ANYONE
WHO WATCHES THE NEWS**

BREAK IT DOWN

HOW SOFTWARE HELPS

Medal of Honor Warfighter is built on Digital Illusions' Frostbite 2 game engine, which was also used to make Battlefield 3. (The 2010 MoH used the Unreal Engine for the campaign and Frostbite for multiplayer.) This means you'll see a lot of cool visual effects, not the least of which is the utter destruction of the environment and architecture, as demonstrated here during a mortar strike.

Another plus: Kristoffer "Hoffe" Bergqvist, MoHW's creative director and multiplayer lead, said that using Frostbite gave his team the ability to start testing (and polishing) the multiplayer side of the game much earlier in the development process than they did with the last Medal of Honor.





GETAWAY BOAT

You took your time getting to an enemy complex (well, to avoid being discovered). Now that you've rescued the hostages, you need to get out fast.

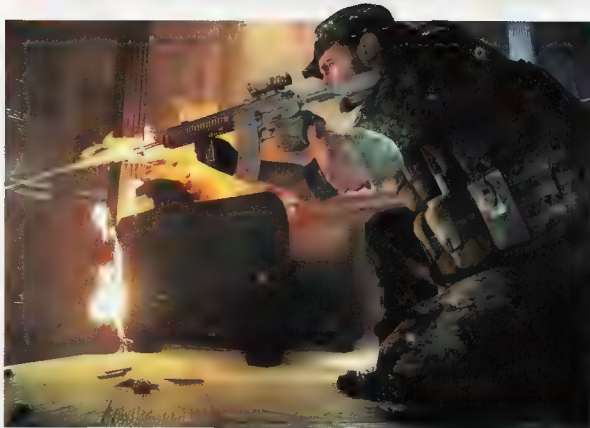
MACHINE GUN

Just what every getaway boat should have firmly bolted to it. To use on bad guys who don't like you taking their hostages.

PREACHER

This Tier 1 Operator is one of MoH's two main characters. As much as he'd like to, he's not thinking of his wife and daughter now.

CLASS WANTED: MULTIPLAYER CHARACTERS



LOADS OF CHOICE

Bergqvist explains there are six classes (multiplied by 12 different nationalities of operators means there are 72 characters to unlock), each with different weapons, class abilities, and "support actions."

The class options are Assaulter, Demolition, Heavy Gunner, Point Man, Sniper, and Spec Ops. Bergqvist says the intention is to have all of them balanced, so there are no competitive advantages, but there'll be pluses and minuses for each.

The support actions look to be the coolest part, with one offensive and one defensive for each. For example, the Point Man can send out a mortar-launched UAV (to recon or bomb) or call in a Little Bird airstrike.



▼ Imagine having this machine gun mounted on the front of your car, and you're in traffic...



MORE STORY

If you're a fan of narrative, you'll be happy to know that *Medal of Honor Warfighter* has more than just the single-player campaign to engage you. Bergqvist tells me a story runs through the Combat Missions gameplay mode.

"When we designed those levels, we sat down with operatives, and talked to them about missions and how to succeed in them," Bergqvist says. "They actually helped to design them: We talked about targets they usually go for and how they would go for these targets, then tried to get that into the Combat Missions levels."

He further explains that each mission starts with a cinematic, and then gives you a linear set of objectives. Completing each objective triggers a cinematic that shows what you've done "to add a bit more drama," Bergqvist notes.



PRE-ORDER NEWS

Just as we were wrapping this story, EA told us about two special deals available for the game: In the first offer, if you pre-order *Medal of Honor Warfighter* or buy Linkin Park's latest CD, *Living Things*, you'll get access to the "Linkin Park/Medal of Honor Warfighter All Access Pass Website." The second offer gives you a \$5 discount on *MoHW* if you buy *Living Things*. Check with your local Best Buy for more info.



"IT'S NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT WHEN YOU PRESS PLAY, THAT'S FOR SURE."
—GREG GOODRICH



ELITE SOLDIER + KILLER GUN = 10-0-0-0

01 BODYPLAY

Weapons (and the parts that make them up) can be used to personalize

02 PROSTHETE

Here's another example of the level of detail that the game engine brings to destruction



GAME DETAILS



MEDAL OF HONOR WARFIGHTER

INFO

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Danger Close
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

RELEASE DATE

October 23, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 20-player online

GENRE

First-person shooter

SUITABLE FOR

Gamers who love the thrill of a shooter as well as the emotion of a good movie

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Become familiar with the role of a Tier 1 Operator with 2010's *Medal of Honor* series reboot



WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Medal of Honor Warfighter*.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ A story developed by actual Tier 1 Operators
- ♥ Huge strides toward weapon authenticity
- ♥ Fire teams in multiplayer are an intriguing new concept



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Could there be too much emphasis on cut-scenes and story evolution?

WORLD OF WARCRAFT IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR MMOs OF ALL TIME.

DIVE INTO THE
WORLD OF
MMOs

THE SECRET
WORLD

TERA BOASTS REAL-TIME
ACTION COMBAT, WHICH IS
UNCOMMON IN THE GENRE

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MMOs

LEARN EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW
BEFORE JUMPING INTO
YOUR FIRST MMO

BY HOLLANDER COOPER

Massively Multiplayer Online RPGs (MMOs)—such as *World of Warcraft*, *Rift*, and *Star Wars: The Old Republic*—are some of the most complex games in existence. Each contains its own digital world, filled with thousands of other players completing quests, competing in player-versus-player (PvP) combat, fueling in-game economies through crafting professions, and exploring the multiple layers of strategy that make the genre one of the most rewarding gaming has to offer.

Working with a few friends to overcome a difficult dungeon or teaming up with dozens of strangers to down a gargantuan boss will give you a heart-pounding thrill that's second to none.

But you'll never experience it if you don't take that first step, and that first step can be awfully daunting for newcomers. This guide will help you overcome the initial hurdles: learning the lingo, creating a character, joining a clan, and most importantly, picking the perfect MMO for your play style. ►

World of Warcraft

There's a reason WoW has over 10 million subscribers—it's streamlined, fun, and easy to get into. Though it wasn't the first MMO, it pioneered many of the mechanics that make the genre what it is today. Millions still love jumping into the world of Azeroth as a Night Elf or Orc to partake in giant, complex raids and PvP battles.

RIFT

If you're looking to fully immerse yourself in the "massively" part of the "MMO" acronym, *Rift* is definitely for you. The game focuses on gigantic battles with hundreds of players working together at any given time, beating back world-ending attacks that come from another realm.

TERA

MMO combat has always been a bit dry, but *Tera* attempts to spice things up with action-based combat more similar to what's found in tradition-

al adventure games. The queuing is still as stale as it gets, but the fast-paced gameplay makes for awesome PvE and PvP battles, as there's a heavy emphasis on dodging and timing.

The Secret World

While most MMOs take place in fantasy worlds, *The Secret World* focuses on a current-day Earth-based experience. Set during the apocalypse, it allows you to essentially create your own character class, making it one of the most customizable MMOs currently available.

Star Wars: The Old Republic

Star Wars fans can just skip over the rest of the list and start here. *The Old Republic* gives you the quintessential *Star Wars* experience, with a story-based approach that makes it feel more like a single-player game than an MMO. Except, obviously, you're playing with thousands of others.



LORD OF THE RINGS ONLINE



THE JOURNEY BEGINS...

Without fail, just about every MMO will start you in the same place: character creation. It makes sense, doesn't it? Before you can go off and forge your destiny, you first need to exist. Each MMO is its own living world, and you'll start by choosing which race within that world you'd like to play. This step is often mostly cosmetic, though each race that's offered usually comes with a few minor passive abilities as well.

So, once you pick the race you like the most (and customize your character's appearance), you're able to choose your class,

such as a warrior, spellcaster, or healer.

Though classes in different MMOs usually have slight variances in how they play, they, too, are fairly uniform between games, because the traditional MMO formula requires three components: the tank, the DPS (short-hand for damage-per-second, a blanket term for classes whose primary purpose is to deal damage), and the healer. This "holy trinity" of MMORPGs exists in a majority of games, with the tank soaking enemy damage and keeping foes from attacking teammates, the DPS laying down as much damage as possible, and the healer...well, healing, obviously.

Whichever you choose, know that you'll be playing that class for hundreds of hours (unless you make a new character), so take some time to think about how you want to play. If you're a fan of charging to the front of the battlefield like Kratos in *God of War*, you're likely going to want to play as the tank; if you'd rather sit in the back, firing rockets and blasting the enemies with machine guns like Master Chief, then you're going to want to be a DPS; and if you think you'd prefer keeping your teammates alive and providing support buffs like *Team Fortress'* Medic, then you should try your hand at being the healer.

5

Best
Free-to-Play
MMOs**DC Universe Online**

Part of the fun of playing an MMO is getting to immerse yourself in a fantasy world, and few games do that as well as *DC Universe Online*. You'll make your own hero or villain, then go toe-to-toe with popular characters from the comics in action-based, visceral combat.

Lord of the Rings: Online

Though *LoTRO* doesn't stray too far off the typical

MMO path, it's likely the biggest, most complete free-to-play MMO out there, with dozens of hours of content available without spending a dime. It also wears its love for the property on its sleeve, making it an easy choice for fans of Tolkien's books.

Aion

Most MMORPGs force you to keep your fight on the ground, but not *Aion*. Instead, this MMO lets you take to the sky, flying around and battling opponents in angelic airborne duels. It's also a visual tour de force, with some of the best graphics of any MMO out right now. Be warned, though—it's really "grindy," meaning you should expect to "farm"

monsters for kills nonstop to level up.

Vindictus

Running on the same game engine that powered *Half-Life 2* and *Left 4 Dead*, *Vindictus* looks and plays more like *God of War* than *World of Warcraft*. The action-packed gameplay is much faster than a majority of MMOs, making for quick, entertaining brawls.

Dungeons & Dragons Online

Dungeons & Dragons Online doesn't attempt to throw you into an open world. Instead, it focuses on two things: exploring well-crafted dungeons, and slaying brutal dragons. It provides a more focused experience, and one that's great for anyone looking for more bite-sized encounters.

AION SEPARATES ITSELF FROM THE PACK BY LETTING YOU PARTICIPATE IN AERIAL BATTLES.

DC UNIVERSE ONLINE

GETTING STARTED

After making your character, your actual journey will begin. Usually, you're thrown into the game's world with only minor tips and tutorials to guide you. You're going to be pushed and pulled in a dozen different directions, being directed toward crafting professions, player-versus-player battles, and questing areas. If you're new to the genre, the best thing you can do is fill up your quest log with objectives and go about executing them. Generally speaking, MMOs are notorious for bland quests that'll have you killing X of one creature and collecting Y of another thing

while delivering Z to a nearby NPC without much regard to story. While these tasks are often boring, the act of completing them with others can be absolutely enthralling.

TEAM UP

MMOs are all about community. One thing you'll want to do is join a guild. Think of a guild as a big Xbox Live or PSN friends list, except it's more organized and full of people interested in helping you out. Even if you don't join one, though, questing is pretty easy to figure out, and there will always be people looking for questing groups.

As you quest, you'll obtain experience points, level up, and gain abilities. It's going to be a bit overwhelming at first, especially once you start unlocking dozens of different skills, but learning to properly use these tools will drastically increase your character's power.

Some MMOs split the player base into two or more factions, manufacturing hostile rivalries. This often results in PvP encounters, where you will be tasked with battling other players to the death. These confrontations can occur either in the world as you quest, or in objective-based arenas.



DUNGEONS & END-GAME

You'll likely run into dungeons while leveling. No, not *Skyrim*-style dungeons where you jump in, kill a few baddies, and then head out. I'm talkin' MMO-instantiated dungeons. These are tough areas that require a full team of players to complete, and are filled with difficult enemies and even more difficult bosses that, when killed, drop high-quality rewards. It's here where your mastery of your skills (and, more importantly, your role in the "holy trinity") comes into play.

Reaching the level cap in an MMO takes a long, long time—often between 50 and a few hundred hours. But once you max out, the game isn't over. No, most would argue that is where the MMO experience truly begins.

Every MMO has its own spin on "end-game," though just about all of them approach it with the same basic concept: give you increasingly difficult dungeons to play over and over again to win awesome gear for your character. This usually leads to raids, which will have you completing even harder dungeons with dozens of players that must work together in flawless unison. For many, this is the pinnacle of the MMO experience. For others, participating in PvP or crafting and selling goods and services to others are the ultimate highs. There are MMOs that specialize in each of these things.

IT'S NOT OVER YET

Every MMO will come with its own features and unique elements, from *Rift*'s massive open-world events to *Star Wars: The Old Republic*'s personalized story. It's here that the otherwise similar games spread apart, baking vastly different cakes from the same pantry of basic ingredients. Finding the one that fits you might be daunting at first, but once you do, and once you've given yourself to the world of MMOs, you're in for an experience unlike any other. 

A Glimpse of MMOs on the Horizon

Guild Wars 2

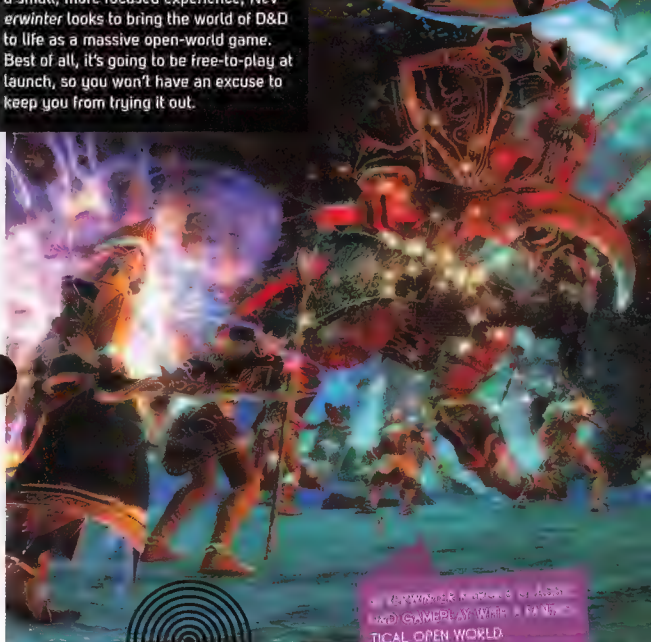
From what has been shown off so far, *Guild Wars 2* looks to make great strides toward modernizing the MMO with changes to the class makeup, PvP, and even the way you'll interact with other players. If you're waiting for something fresh, this one's likely for you.

The Elder Scrolls Online

Thought you were done wasting hundreds of hours in *The Elder Scrolls*? Think again. *TESO* is going to be a full-fledged MMO set in the world of *Oblivion* and *Skyrim*, so you'll have plenty of reasons to wander around Tamriel when this game comes out next year.

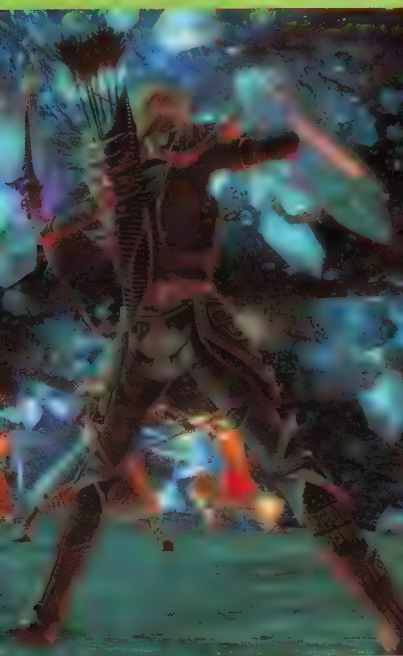
Neverwinter

Whereas *Dungeons & Dragons Online* is a small, more focused experience, *Neverwinter* looks to bring the world of D&D to life as a massive open-world game. Best of all, it's going to be free-to-play at launch, so you won't have an excuse to keep you from trying it out.





MMO Dictionary



Tank: The heavily armored, high-health player responsible for holding the attention of enemies and keeping the group safe.

Healer: The class that keeps players alive with buffs and healing abilities.

DPS: Damage-per-second, but also the term used to describe the primary damage-dealing classes.

Support: Another class type that focuses on buffing its team and debuffing its enemies.

Aggro: A term used to describe who has an enemy's attention (e.g. "I have aggro!").

Buff/Debuff: Conditions that improve/weaken the stats of a player or enemy.

DoT/HoT: Damage/heal-over time, where an effect occurs over the course of several seconds.

PvP: Short for "player-versus-player" combat.

Need/Greed: Telling others you need an item for your character, or you want an item out of greed (to sell).

OOM: Out of mana. Some games call mana something else, and the "M" might swap for whatever that game calls it (OOF for out-of-force in *Star Wars*, for instance).

PvE: Player-versus-environment, denotes non-PvP encounters.

LFG/LFM: Looking for a group to join, or looking for more people to join a group.

Raid: A large group, usually made up of 8-25 players (though sometimes up to 64 or more).

Guild: A large collection of players on an in-game team.

Instance: A private area exclusive to you and your group, separate from the main open world.

CC: Crowd-control skills, such as stuns or sleep spells.



WIN
PRIZES



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GAME
DEALS



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TOP PICKS

RATINGS BREAKDOWN:

@GAMER includes only the best games in our Top Picks section. If you don't see it here, it's probably not worth getting.

○○○○

○○○○○ A good game with some flaws. Fans of the genre will probably enjoy it.

○○○○○○ An excellent game that we strongly recommend.

○○○○○○○ A near-perfect gaming experience.



Hey, meet the crew!

@GAMER wants you to know about the best-of-the-best games out now or coming soon, so we've put together a different kind of Geek Squad to help you out.

This month, we ask the gamer panel:

What game will stay in your system the longest this summer?



Charlie Barratt



David Chapman



Casey DeFreitas



Andrew Hayward

spend all three months finishing my Paragon, body dies!" save files.

Super Heroes, I'll be busy dishing out LEGO-Gotham's city limits.

"em all!" With about 200 Pokémon and scores of

the frenetic online events that should keep

body dies!" save files.

Gotham's city limits.

be busy for months!

summer long.

T

TOP PICKS

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- 82 London 2012 - The Official Video Game of the Olympic Games
- 83 Brave: The Video Game
- 83 Test Drive: Ferrari Racing Legends

F

NOT PICKS

The following games did not make the @GAMER cut:

✦ *Madagascar 3: The Video Game* (reviewed on Xbox 360): "An endless series of bland fetch quests that only appeals to the youngest fans of the movie." (Michael Grimm)

✦ *Men In Black: Alien Crisis* (reviewed on Xbox 360): "An ugly, half-baked shooter with none of the series' charm or standards. Avoid or suffer." (Michael Grimm)

GAME
OF THE
MONTH

DIABLO III

Prepare to wear out your mouse fighting Hell's minions • Words: Ryan Taljorick

The billion or so times I told myself I'd stop playing *Diablo III* after I cleared just one more dingy cavern is indicative of the game's enslaving nature. You explore, find monsters, kill them, and squeal with joy as their broken bodies spew piles of glorious, glorious loot. You equip this newfound gear, making your character slightly more powerful, only to replace said gear minutes later with some new trophy.

This pattern repeats over and over in a viciously addicting cycle—it was hard to turn the game off when I knew the ultimate loot cache could be just up ahead. It's a simple design, one that taps into the basic human desire to have just a little bit more, to become a little bit better than you were before. Murdering monsters for incremental upgrades is at the core of every game in the *Diablo* franchise—but in *Diablo III*, this process has been transformed by some great new features.

The new classes (see sidebar) keep dungeon crawling from feeling stale or overly familiar. Each has a huge variety of fun-to-use skills, which are customized by equipping Runes—add-ons that imbue selected skills with unique properties, such as additional damage or stun effects. The sheer number of interchangeable combinations allows for wild experimentation in how characters can be played, and I dug finding new ways to slaughter my enemies. Plus, because new abilities are obtained with each level, the process of leveling up becomes just as addicting as loot hunting.

Combining your own abilities with those of other players online is a blast, too, as each class complements the others. Having a buddy use his Monk to draw enemies together so I could use my Witch

Doctor's suicidal zombie dogs to blow them up was just one of the many ways we became a tidal wave of destruction. It was easy to get lost in the euphoric arc of clicking monsters to death, and the simple but effective combat satisfies some deep, primal urge to conquer.

It's a shame, then, that this driving force is often forcefully interrupted. *Diablo III* requires a constant Internet connection, which means solo sessions are just as prone to server restarts, crashes, and lag as multiplayer games. Even when things ran smoothly, I had to deal with the frequent intrusion of cringe-worthy narrative. The writing was so astonishingly poor that it became distracting, and, try as I might, I frequently had no idea what was happening in the story. But none of these things was as jarring as the fact that *Diablo III* was released with some content missing. PvP (player-versus-player) combat will be added via patches down the road, but I couldn't help but feel a bit cheated by its absence.

Still, I found myself unable to stay away from *Diablo III* for long. Its allure was overwhelming, and I was always eager to jump back in and face off against the Lord of Terror and his demonic army. Just a little farther, I'd tell myself, only to discover I'd lost an entire day to clicking, killing, looting—and when the forces of evil had finally been vanquished, I started all over again on a higher difficulty for a little bit more. To become a little bit better than I had been before. ☺

**I DUG FINDING
NEW WAYS
TO SLAUGHTER
MY ENEMIES**



TERROR RETURN

Diablo, The Lord of Terror, has this nasty habit of being a jerk. He's back once more to make a mess of things.

CLASSES

WIZARD

Like *Diablo II*'s Sorceress, the Wizard has access to a huge variety of magical spells to massacre the demonic army. Stacking Intelligence is key, but don't slack on the Vitality. You'll want to have some survivability for Inferno mode!



MONK

Essentially a reworking of the Paladin class, Monks use devastating melee attacks to turn monsters into mush. They can also heal and dish party-wide buffs, and do a lot of AoE melee damage. Dexterity is their primary attribute.



BARBARIAN

Need brute strength? Look no further than the Barbarian. These guys can dual-wield one-handers and spin around in a tornado of destruction, breaking bad guys in half like it's nobody's business. Feed 'em some Strength and Vitality.



GEAR UP



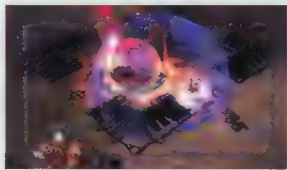
DON'T STAND IN FIRE

Most of the boss battles in *Diablo III* have some pretty interesting combat mechanics. As a general rule, don't stand in fire or glowing circles. Turns out that stuff hurts.

GEAR UP

Remember gambling on items with Deckard Cain in *Diablo II* in hopes of getting a rare item? That's gone. Instead, you can craft your own gear by stripping equipment to its base components, then using those components to forge new items with random magical properties. Or

you can take advantage of the new Auction House, which works like an in-game eBay, where players sell gear and items to other adventurers for gold or real currency. Of course, you can always score some new loot the old-fashioned way by farming bosses or champion monsters.



DEMON HUNTER \\\

Demon Hunters are masters at ranged combat, employing crossbows and bows to mow down enemies from afar. When cornered, they can use traps and acrobatic maneuvers to get out of harm's way. Like the Monk, they require Dexterity.



WITCH DOCTOR \\\

Ever fantasized about summoning minions and infecting foes with deadly damage-over-time diseases? If your answer is yes, you need to do two things: Play a Witch Doctor and seek immediate help. Seriously.



MULTIPLAYER CHANGES \\\

There were many reasons for joining or hosting multiplayer games in *Diablo II*. Enemies would become stronger, there would be more of them, and they would drop more (and better) loot when killed. Not so in *Diablo III*. Instead, enemies just get stronger every time another player joins a game. There are no experience-point gains or increases in item drops or quality—but that doesn't mean playing with others isn't worthwhile. In fact, pooling attacks on packs of demons means you'll kill them quicker, which, in theory, results in increased potential for additional gear and gold.



▲ In multiplayer games, loot that drops belongs only to you, so you don't have to race to pick it up.

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS 12



DIABLO III

INFO

Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
Developer: Blizzard Entertainment
Platforms: PC, Mac
Reviewed on: PC

RELEASE DATE

May 15, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 4-player co-op online (PvP to be added later)

GENRE

Action RPG

SUITABLE FOR

Mouse-clicking addicts, loot hoarders, gold farmers, hack 'n' slashers



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Simple but fun combat
- ♥ Great new skill system allows for multiple character builds per class
- ♥ Lots of loot and gold



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Shipped missing content
- ✗ Rather poor writing



ANDY SAYS:

Server interruptions are a pain in the cutlass, but have been less frequent since the first week the game was out.

gamer

OVERALL RATING:

4.25





LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW

Delicious on the outside, dull on the inside • Words: Charlie Berralt

How to describe Lollipop Chainsaw? A shamelessly juvenile, gore- and girl-obsessed actionfest starring a cheerleader who hunts zombies, it is—somehow, and at the same time—a shamelessly sweet romantic comedy about that cheerleader's relationship with her very confused boyfriend...who happens to be a talking, decapitated head. This is a game in love with movies (John Hughes, meet George Romero) and with music (a super-fun soundtrack features licensed music from the 1950s through 1980s), but also with other games: You won't just notice references to retro classics like *Pac-Man*, you'll play them. Boss fights range from a hippie with hallucinogenic powers to a punk rocker who wields swear words as weapons, while the missions can take you from shooting hooops with the undead to running them over in farm equipment. Lollipop Chainsaw's ideas are deliciously, deliriously all over the place.

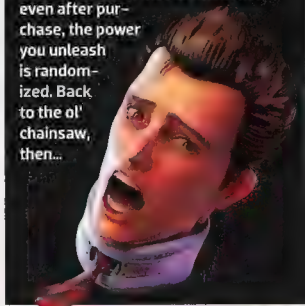
Lollipop Chainsaw's gameplay, unfortunately, comes in only a single flavor: bland

and button-mashy. No matter where you are, or what insane stuff is happening in the story at that moment, the combat is almost always the same. Zombie shuffles towards you. You attack zombie with the same two or three chainsaw combos. Zombie endures an exhausting, annoying number of attacks before dying. Repeat a dozen or so times to clear the room, then run into the next room—which will probably look awfully similar to the last—and start the whole mind-numbing, thumb-calling formula over again. Sure, you can buy a bunch of new combos, but they don't feel as cool as they look, and with an endless amount of damage-soaking enemies to dispatch, you'll often have to opt for health upgrades instead. Even the minigames and boss battles I praised above grow repetitive, sometimes frustrating, after the first few minutes.

Still, while the core experience of Lollipop Chainsaw is disappointingly dull, its bright colors and bold eccentricities do make for a pretty, and pretty entertaining, surface. Take a taste...just don't bite too hard. ☺

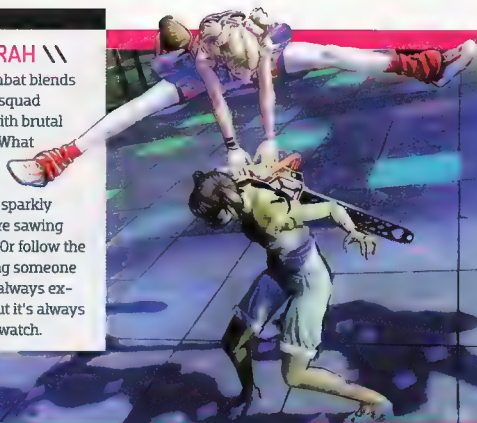
HEAD OVER HEELS

The game's love story between zombie-slaying cheerleader Juliet and her decapitated, somehow-still-wearing-a-necktie boyfriend Nick is strangely, surprisingly sweet. Too bad his powers to help out in a fight, although fun and unusual, are almost never available—each and every use of Nick wastes precious coins, and even after purchase, the power you unleash is randomized. Back to the ol' chainsaw, then...



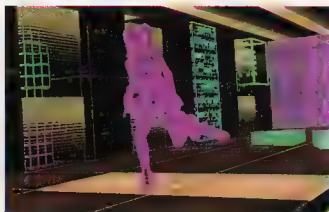
RAH RAH RAH //

The game's combat blends graceful cheer-squad dance moves with brutal chainsaw kills. What other heroine can stun her enemies with a sparkly pom-pom before sawing their limbs off? Or follow the splits by splitting someone in half? It's not always exciting to play, but it's always entertaining to watch.



MINCE TAPE //

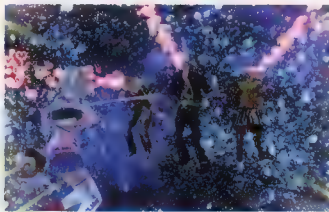
Yes, *Lollipop Chainsaw* includes the song "Lollipop" (over and over and over again). Other than that obvious choice, however, the soundtrack is fantastic. From The Runaways' punk-rock anthem "Cherry Bomb" in the menus to electronic mixes from Skrillex and MSTRKRFT during battle, I never knew what genre or decade of music I'd hear next.



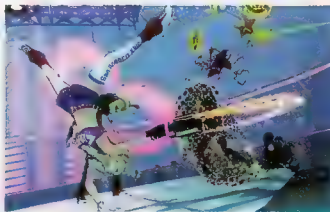
▲ Playable parodies of retro games like *Elevator Action* help spice up *Lollipop Chainsaw*'s missions.



▲ She's spelling out "Hello," not "Help." Juliet is one videogame damsel who's rarely in distress.



▲ Finish off multiple flesh-eaters with a single swipe and the action moves to outer space. Sure, why not?



▲ Re-dead the undead for coins. Spend those coins on new moves, costumes, songs, and help from Nick.

PS3 XBOX 360

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS



LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW

INFO

Publisher: Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment
Developer: Grasshopper Manufacture
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360
Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

June 12, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

GENRE

Action

SUITABLE FOR

Willy Wonka, Marcus Fenix, Buffy Summers

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ A smorgasbord of super-silly, yet super-fun concepts
- ♥ A cute, quirky love story amidst all the carnage
- ♥ Unexpectedly perfect music for slaying zombies

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Combat goes stale fast
- ✗ Linear, last-gen level design
- ✗ Too immature at times

ANDY SAYS:

I can handle that *Lollipop Chainsaw* is campy—and expected it to be—but the lack of gameplay variety is a letdown.

OVERALL RATING:

3





SPEC OPS: THE LINE

There's no place for morality in war • Words: Hillary Goldstein

I've killed thousands of videogame soldiers and never felt guilty...until I played *Spec Ops: The Line*. Set in Dubai's ruins, *Spec Ops* puts you in the shoes of Captain Martin Walker, who may or may not be going insane.

A civil war has broken out among the U.S. military and you're stuck in the middle. In the struggle to rescue the surviving civilians and slip through the grasp of war-hungry soldiers, you make some choices. Some very bad choices. Those decisions

make for as haunting and jarring a story as you're ever likely to see in a videogame.

For those who'd rather just shoot and kill, there's plenty of that too. *Spec Ops* is a solid third-person cover-shooter that will test your resolve on its harder difficulties. Enemies flank, lob grenades, and are smart enough to take cover to avoid your pesky bullets. Good thing you have a special weapon at your disposal.

Sand plays a major role, both in the story and in gameplay. Toss a grenade at a sand

dune and it not only blows up hostiles, it creates a cloud of dust, obscuring your enemies' line of sight. Shoot the glass roof inside a half-buried building and sand pours down to crush your foes.

Spec Ops offers a change of pace from the usual military-shooter fare. It doesn't always succeed in its mission—the story is powerful, but heavy-handed, and the cover system has some issues—but it dares to be different. And it makes every single bullet matter. 

AS HAUNTING AND JARRING A STORY AS YOU'RE EVER LIKELY TO SEE IN A VIDEOGAME

Cover Up
If you fight out in the open, you won't live long. Stick to cover at all times.

Bullet Time
Score a headshot, and time slows down for a second, so you can admire your work.





SPEC OPS: THE LINE

INFO

Publisher: 2K Games
Developer: Yager/Darkside Game Studios
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC
Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

June 26, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

8-player online

GENRE

Third-person shooter

SUITABLE FOR

Those looking for something a little different from *Call of Duty*

Rocket launchers are surprisingly weak, but at least you have some backup with AI offline and your buddies online.

Stay close to your partners and they'll provide valuable buffs to keep you alive a little longer.

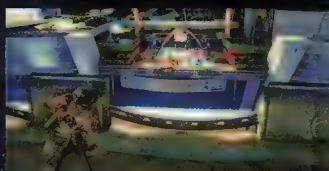
DON'T GO TO WAR ALONE

The single-player campaign may eschew some of the tropes of *Call of Duty*, but the multiplayer borrows from it heavily. You'll find familiar, if not identical, weapons and outfits as you level up. The best of these is the live-fire exercise called Attrition, where your team must destroy three enemy vehicles before they can obliterate their high-value target. The catch? You have to kill the enemy's tank in the same time. Another good one is Attrition, where you have to kill the enemy's tank in the same time. Another good one is Attrition, where you have to kill the enemy's tank in the same time. But with a measly six players, *Spec Ops* can't quite make the punch to stand toe-to-toe with its rivals.



A CITY OF SAND

A disastrous series of sandstorms have buried the opulent city of Dubai. The devastation is beautifully contrasted by Dubai's shining skyscrapers. Many shooters have interchangeable settings that offer little of interest outside of the enemies you have to shoot. You won't forget *Spec Ops* or Dubai. It's a unique, stunning, and tragic world worth experiencing.



The rooftops of massive skyscrapers offer some epic sniping and amazing views.



Remember: In Dubai, no one can hear you scream obscenities at the top of your lungs.



WHAT'S GREAT:

- Amazing and original setting in a devastated Dubai
- Sand is a weapon
- An emotional journey



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- Only eight players online? C'mon!
- Cover system doesn't always work right



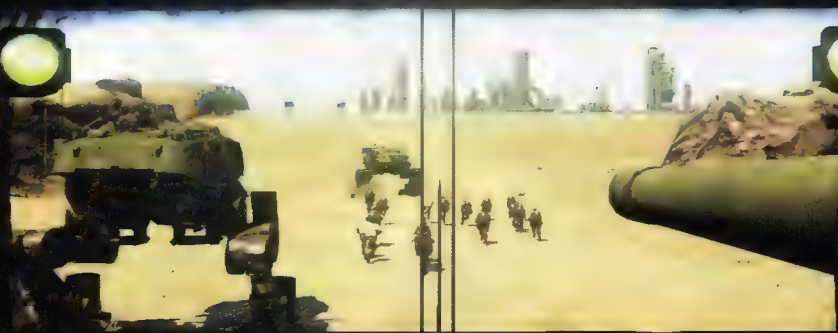
CHARLIE SAYS:

I suffer from a disorder known as Middle Eastern military-shooter fatigue. *Spec Ops* could be the cure.

OVERALL RATING:

4





STEEL BATTALION HEAVY ARMOR

Capcom's mech sim is back with a vengeance...and Kinect support **Words: David Chapman**

Any conversation about hardcore console games is bound to include the epic Xbox mech simulator *Steel Battalion* and its mammoth controller. Now the heavy metal experience is back in *Steel Battalion Heavy Armor*. Rest assured: This new Kinect-enabled reboot lives up to the legacy of the original.

Heavy Armor puts you right in the cockpit of a Vertical Tank (VT) as it lumbers through the battlefields of a technologically crippled future to retake the United States from invading forces. The game ditches the custom controller from the original game, replacing it with a hybrid of the standard gamepad and motion controls. The controller is used mainly for VT movement and firing, while the Kinect is used for...well, just about

everything else. Whether you're taking a peek through the periscope, shifting gears, arming weapons, or even venting choking smoke from the cockpit, you'll literally have your hands full piloting the towering VT.

With so much of the game's controls relying on the responsiveness of the Kinect sensor, I'll admit I was afraid that everything was going to fall apart as soon as the action got thick. But once I found the sweet spot for it to register my movements, the controls worked surprisingly well. Don't get me wrong:

Moving around a multi-ton tank on legs isn't a cakewalk by any means, and the complexities of successfully piloting a VT while managing its crew are a lot to take in. It's challenging, to say the least, one that's certainly not suited for everyone.

If you're up for it, however, *Heavy Armor* proves that Microsoft's Kinect is much more than just a gimmicky motion-control device—this is hardcore motion gaming at its finest. With ultrarealistic presentation and fast-paced action, the only thing missing is the smoke stinging your eyes and filling your nostrils. ©

THIS IS HARDCORE MOTION GAMING AT ITS FINEST



▼ Co-op supports two to four players; AI fills open slots.



BURNING BRIDGES

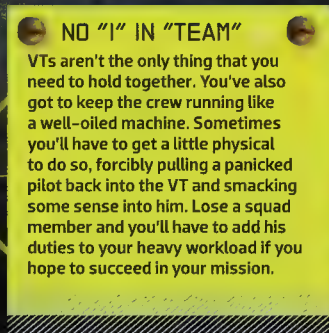
Some action takes place out of the cockpit, such as sabotaging enemy routes or helping allies.



Even small acts of kindness or encouragement to your crew pay off when the lead starts flying.

EVOLVING THE SERIES:

The original *Steel Battalion* used its custom three-foot long controller, complete with 40-plus buttons and switches, two joysticks, a gear shift, and three foot pedals to control the game's high-tech mechs. The online-only sequel, *Line of Contact*, added multiplayer support for up to 10 players in five-on-five firefights, assuming you could find nine friends to play against. With *Heavy Armor*, the series ditches the stick in favor of the Kinect and now allows VT pilots to team up with up to three friends over Xbox Live for co-op missions.



NO "I" IN "TEAM"

VTs aren't the only thing that you need to hold together. You've also got to keep the crew running like a well-oiled machine. Sometimes you'll have to get a little physical to do so, forcibly pulling a panicked pilot back into the VT and smacking some sense into him. Lose a squad member and you'll have to add his duties to your heavy workload if you hope to succeed in your mission.



▲ DOWN TIME

Although the VT cockpit might get a bit cramped at times, coming up for air like this might be the last breath you take, thanks to strategically placed enemy snipers.

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS



STEEL BATTALION HEAVY ARMOR

INFO

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: From Software
Platforms: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

June 19, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 4-player co-op online

GENRE

Mech sim

SUITABLE FOR

Virtual robot jockeys eager for hardcore mechanized combat



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Responsive Kinect-based controls
- ♥ Realistic environments and atmosphere



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Controls are complex and take a while to master
- ✗ Difficulty level will turn off many gamers



RYAN SAYS:

Smart move, Capcom, dropping the ginormous custom controller in favor of Kinect-supported gameplay.



OVERALL RATING:

4





LEGO BATMAN 2: DC SUPER HEROES

LEGOs have never looked (or played) this good • Words: Ryan Scott

At this point, Traveller's Tales' LEGO action games are a bit like comfort food: They always deliver exactly what we expect. For some, this ran its course a long time ago; for others, the LEGO formula is still palatable. Regardless of which group you identify with, LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes won't change your mind.

LEGO Batman 2's basic foundation hasn't changed: You're still running around linear levels, smashing everything in existence, bopping a steady stream of enemies into blocky chunks, building LEGO devices, and employing various power-ups and environmental objects to solve myriad puzzles. The Batman theme means that the game is set in the Caped Crusader's Gotham City, with Batman and Robin in pursuit of the city's colorful array of gimmick criminals, and donning various bat-suits that empower them to climb magnetized walls, turn invisible, freeze water,

shatter glass, and perform other assorted activities. Collect stuff, defeat enemies, solve puzzles. Check, check, check.

Yet, for all its baseline predictability, LEGO Batman 2 delivers a welcome sense of scope. Gotham is a sprawling quest hub, with extra-curricular activities, collectibles, and optional boss fights tucked into many corners. It never provokes the sort of between-mission wanderlust as, say, Grand Theft Auto, but it actually feels like a cohesive setting. Full-on camera control—not an everyday feature in these games—adds to that, though I'm miffed at the lack of an inverted Y-axis option. I need my down to be up!

But the most striking and well-implemented addition is the fully voice-acted plot. Characters no longer mime their way through cut-scenes, and the considerable voice talent on parade here—including lots of "DC animated universe" regulars, such as Scott Menville as Robin and Clancy Brown as Lex Luthor—turns the narrative into something disarmingly engaging. Overused voice actor Steve Blum does the world's saddest Mark Hamill impression in his turn as the Joker, but I suppose I can forgive that. And once the rest of the Justice League finally shows up (which does take a while), it turns into a genuinely funny ensemble piece that just might be the best videogame ever to feature a guy named Superman.

HELLO, LADIES!



BAT-RIDES \\\

Batman and Robin's signature vehicles—the Batmobile, Robin-cycle, and various land and air rides—play a much bigger role now. For one, they're handy for traveling between missions in the expansive Gotham City. And several vehicular boss fights dot the game, putting you on a fixed course, firing your weaponry at the enemy in question. Like many of the challenges in LEGO Batman 2, these aren't very difficult at all, but they break up the on-foot combat quite nicely. Plus, you know, you get to drive the Batmobile. Always a plus!

HOLY BRICK!



MEOWWW! LEGOs never looked so hot. Wait, that sounded wrong...

LEGO BATMAN 2 DELIVERS A WELCOME SENSE OF SCOPE



▼ Despite its subtitle, this is still quite a Batman-centric game.

THE BIG LEAGUES

LEGO Batman 2 is a Batman-centric game, but his pals in the Justice League show up to help, too. Superman is especially fun, portrayed as a dashing, full-of-himself, and slightly ditzzy hero—and the game doesn't waste any time unleashing the classic John Williams Superman theme to underscore his appearance. This also may be the first time an in-game Superman has lived up to his legend: The first time you actually take Superman's reins, he's literally immortal, able to do almost everything that the Dynamic Duo is capable of, and possesses the power of flight on top of it all. Sheesh!

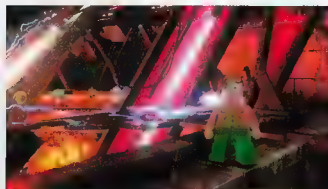
A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN



▲ Don't you worry your little hearts, Dynamic Duo—Superman will just handle everything himself.



▲ Once again Wonder Woman smugly defies conventional wisdom on appropriate thunderstorm attire.



▲ Aquaman can theoretically breathe under lava, but he's too tuna—err sorry, chicken—to try. Typical.



▲ Look out, Batman! Steve Blum somehow got hired in another role! He's killed Mark Hamill!

PS3 XBOX360 Wii PC
DS 3DS PS VITA



LEGO BATMAN 2: DC SUPER HEROES

INFO

Publisher: Warner Bros.
Interactive Entertainment
Developer: Traveller's Tales
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii,
PC, DS, 3DS, PS Vita
Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE

June 19, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 2-player locally

GENRE

Action

SUITABLE FOR

DC Comics
and LEGO lovers



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Voice acting makes the formula more engaging
- ♥ Creative use of environments
- ♥ Superman!



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Lack of controller options
- ✗ Extremely long load times
- ✗ Aquaman...



CHARLIE SAYS:

Just when I thought I was out, I'm pulled back in. The formula's overly familiar, but c'mon...it's Batman!

gamer

OVERALL RATING:

4



GRAVITY RUSH

Oh, what a feeling when we're dancing on the ceiling

Movement is an easy thing to take for granted. Walking, running, driving—these are extensions of our day-to-day lives, the common threads that keep even the most fantastical virtual adventures grounded in some minute sense of reality. Even the exciting feats of parkour in such games as *Uncharted* or *Assassin's Creed* are technically feasible by humans far more athletic than I.

Gravity Rush, however, forgoes the laws of physics in favor of a new form of navigation. With the ability to manipulate gravity, Kat, the amnesiac (and often disappointingly aloof) heroine, must save the city of Hekseville from the Nevi—evil blob-like monsters that aim to consume all living things. Using her powers, you'll

plummet from the ground, to walls, to ceilings, each platform becoming your new center of gravity as you land. The game's title perfectly describes the thrill of zipping around its wide-open world populated by high towers, hidden areas, and flight-friendly zones. Most importantly, Gravity Rush never holds you back from letting loose and enjoying yourself.

Most games that give you superpowers restrict how often you can use them or how long they can be sustained—and while this was initially true of Kat's gravity manipulation, I quickly upgraded the ability to the point where I could remain in the air almost indefinitely. This was crucial in later levels where aerial enemy encounters far outnumbered those on the ground. While

I mostly enjoyed the simple combat, I did get frustrated at times, as it was difficult to attack with the precision needed to quickly take down moving targets. Battles that should've lasted a few minutes occasionally dragged on for 15.

Still, I was enthralled by the process of exploring large 3D spaces. I often found myself just flying around the world for the fun of it, soaking in the gorgeous visuals and catchy tunes along the way—I've never enjoyed the simple act of movement so thoroughly. Gravity Rush is one of those rare games that takes something familiar and presents it in a unique way. It's a refreshing experience that feels genuinely new, and easily earns its place as one of PS Vita's must-own titles. **C**

▼ Use Kat's stasis field to pick up objects and NPCs.





RIFT PLANES

One of the best of the game is that, as a challenge-based side quest, it's not too difficult to complete. It's a great way to earn some extra gems and to see some of the game's best scenery. Each is full of fun, a difficult challenge, and a great way to see some of the game's best scenery. It's a great way to see some of the game's best scenery. It's a great way to see some of the game's best scenery.

**GO FOR THE GOLD! ** Challenge Missions can be found throughout the world. These objective-based side quests reward you with the Precious Gems required to upgrade Kat's many abilities. While scoring a Bronze or Silver medal on these challenges is usually pretty painless, snagging a Gold rating can be quite difficult. Thankfully, online leaderboards drove me to outscore my friends.



TAKE 'EM DOWN \\\



▼ See that glowing sphere? Kick that until the Nevi explodes.



NEVI INVASION \\\

Creatures known as Nevi frequently attack the world, ranging in size from little blobs to hulking behemoths. Big aerial skirmishes with the Nevi result in some of the most exciting moments in the game, as victory requires a mix of timed dodges and high-speed strikes.

PS VITA



GRAVITY RUSH

INFO

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: SCEJ
Platforms: PS Vita

RELEASE DATE

June 12, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Online leaderboards

GENRE

Action-adventure

SUITABLE FOR

Lovers of anime and astrophysics



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Controlling gravity to fly around is ultra exciting
- ♥ Easily Vita's prettiest game
- ♥ 15-plus hours of action



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Nonsensical story
- ✗ Kat is often portrayed as an airhead
- ✗ Mandatory motion controls often lack precision



CHARLIE SAYS:

Finally, I've been holding off on a PS Vita purchase until the right game removed all doubt and any excuses. This is it.



OVERALL RATING:

4.25





NCAA FOOTBALL 13

INFO
 Publisher: EA
 Developer: Tiburon
 Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360
 Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE
 July 10, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
 Up to 2-player online

GENRE
 Sports

SUITABLE FOR
 Anyone with a secret crush on Robert Griffin III

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Greater control over the direction of the ball
- ♥ Studio updates are an extremely cool addition
- ♥ Heisman Mode is both fun and creative

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Playbook editor isn't intuitive
- ✖ Reaction Mode is only occasionally useful

RYAN SAYS:

My severe lack of athleticism means I'll likely spend football season playing this.

OVERALL RATING:

4



GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS



Gamer



▲ It's easier than ever to break a huge run with Reaction Time.

NCAA FOOTBALL 13

EA's college football sim is on the verge of something special • Words: Kat Bailey

Something great is brewing at EA's Tiburon studio, home to the Madden NFL and NCAA Football franchises. This year's crop of games seem to "get it" in a way that previous entries have not. Exhibit A is NCAA Football 13, a terrific football sim on the verge of legendary.

NCAA 13 puts more emphasis than ever on realism, the sense of being there that separates videogames from the real thing. It's evident in the way the players follow the ball with their eyes, improved animations, even the ease with which the ball can be spotted over a receiver's shoulder as they streak for the end zone.



STAMPING OUT THE BUGS

NCAA 13 is an improvement in another way as well: bugs. The playbook editor and online play—traditionally two big problem areas—have been given special attention. No more losing your progress in Online Dynasty because your game wasn't recorded!

This all comes together best in the new Heisman Challenge mode, which puts you in the cleats of college stars both past and present. Scrambling around as Robert Griffin III—chasing his most famous milestones or learning his career timeline through video clips and loading screen snippets—is a real joy, and demonstrates a clear love of college football history that any fan will recognize and appreciate.

The only reason I say that NCAA 13 is on "the verge" of true greatness is because the series can clearly still go a step further. The new Reaction Time—a sort of bullet time for college football—doesn't slow down action quite enough to be useful. And Heisman Challenge could certainly use a few more rewards and unlockables. For every irritation, though, you'll find something remarkable, such as the new studio updates, which make you feel as if you're squarely in the middle of GameDay. Such feelings are the Holy Grail of the sports genre—a grail that NCAA Football 13 is closer than ever to reaching. ●



▲ Studio updates bring a whole new level of realism to the presentation.

RESISTANCE: BURNING SKIES

Nearly burns out

Words: Andrew Hayward

First-person shooter fans have long grouched about the lack of dual analog sticks on handheld platforms, but the PlayStation Vita finally solves that problem—and *Resistance: Burning Skies* is the first real test of whether a portable entry can hang with its console brethren.

Luckily, the spin-off story—which follows firefighter Tom Riley as he fights off aliens in New York City following the events of the first PSS entry—nails the core fundamentals. *Burning Skies* looks and feels like a *Resistance* game should, with big setpieces, diverse multifunction guns, and precise movement and aiming that nearly match the console experience. As proof for shooter viability on Vita, developer Nihilistic's attempt hits many of the essential bullet points.

Much of that effort, however, goes to waste in a rote campaign that often does

little more than shuffle you from one enemy encounter to the next, changing only the terrain as you clear areas of sci-fi foes. Last year's *Resistance 3* closed the console trilogy with a lot of emotion and intensity, but *Burning Skies* feels one-note and dated in comparison, and the five-hour campaign loses steam before it wraps.

An inessential storyline, pixelated videos, and obtrusive touch controls certainly don't help matters, either. Thankfully, the online multiplayer is stellar, albeit with the scale being sacrificed for smaller, closer-quarters battles. It's a bite-sized deathmatch suite, but for online thrills on the go, the game satisfies in a pinch.

In many ways, *Resistance: Burning Skies* sets the template for a handheld first-person shooter; it just doesn't bother putting it to consistently great use. **C**

▼ The Vita may be smaller, but the Chimera foes still pack size and intensity.

ONLINE ONSLAUGHT

Unlike the massive skirmishes of the console games, *Resistance* on Vita limits the action to just eight players, though the end result is a smooth and engaging series of portable fights over Wi-Fi. *Burning Skies* features persistent leveling and loadout customization across three modes: Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, and Survival, the last of which tasks the Chimera with converting humans via kills.

▲ You're playing as a human, so you have to watch out for these guys!

PS VITA



RESISTANCE: BURNING SKIES

INFO

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: Nihilistic Software
Platforms: PS Vita

RELEASE DATE

May 29, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 8-player online

GENRE

First-person shooter

SUITABLE FOR

On-the-go shooter nuts,
Resistance diehards



WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Delivers a console-like shooter on the Vita
- ♥ Online multiplayer is plenty fun, though pretty simple



WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Limp campaign lacks excitement
- ✗ Myriad visual and audio glitches
- ✗ Adds little to series storyline



ANDY SAYS:

Burning Skies shows that a handheld system's software catalog doesn't need to be limited to simple games.

OVERALL RATING:

3



© gamer



3DS



KINGDOM HEARTS 3D [DREAM DROP DISTANCE]

INFO

Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: Square Enix
Platforms: 3DS

RELEASE DATE

July 31, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 2-player online

GENRE

Action-RPG

SUITABLE FOR

Angsty emo kids or anyone seeking an early glimpse into the next real sequel

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Wonderful utilization of the 3DS screen and unique features
- ♥ Overall fun combat with varied environments, enemies, and abilities

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Not enough of that much-needed Disney magic

CHARLIE SAYS:

I play this series for Mickey, Donald, and Goofy, not their spiky-haired pals. Thanks, but I'll wait for *Kingdom Hearts III*.



OVERALL RATING:

3.5



3D Gamer

KINGDOM HEARTS 3D [DREAM DROP DISTANCE]

Supersize the angst, hold the Disney • Words: Chuck Osborn

The longer the franchise goes on, the less it seems to be like, well, *Kingdom Hearts*. In this strong debut of the series on 3DS, you alternate playing as longtime hero Sora and somber buddy Riku on a quest to take the Mark of Mastery exam that will prove their worth as Keyblade Masters. Several new modes and features, some exclusive to the 3DS hardware, are the stars here, though, further marginalizing Disney's colorful cast of toons to cameos.

The new Flowmotion ability lets you slide and swing on objects in the environment and pull off powerful acrobatic attacks. In action, however, it is often disorienting, requiring patience and practice to keep from wildly flying around the screen. Entering a portal to another world opens up

a freefalling action sequence in which you dodge obstacles, attack enemies, and collect energy points while falling—derivative, yes, but entertaining. Except for Flowmotion, combat is similar to that in previous entries: Configure your skills and abilities with the Command Deck and then slice treacherous Dream Eaters with your keyblade or blast them with magic.

KH3D looks great on the 3DS screen, and introduces some cool new exclusive features like StreetPass trades, card battles, and interactive AR critters. At least these bonuses will help take your mind off of the comparatively dull Sora and Riku angst-athon.



▲ Sora knows how to clear a room of Dream Eaters with a Quick Blitz attack.



▲ Poor Quasimodo...if only he and other Disney characters had more screen time.

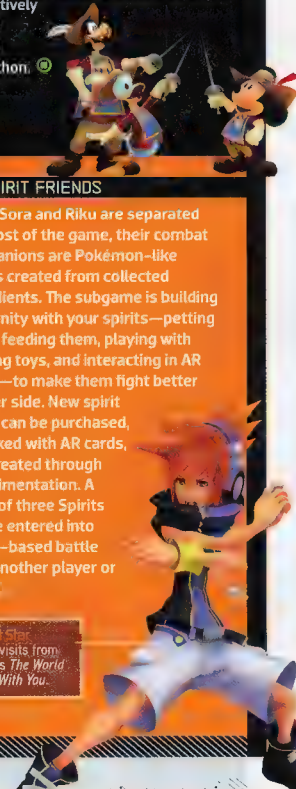


▲ Subtle 3D effects and vivid imagery make KH3D a joy to play.

▼ SPIRIT FRIENDS

Since Sora and Riku are separated for most of the game, their combat companions are Pokémon-like Spirits created from collected ingredients. The subgame is building an affinity with your spirits—petting them, feeding them, playing with training toys, and interacting in AR mode—to make them fight better at your side. New spirit types can be purchased, unlocked with AR cards, and created through experimentation. A team of three Spirits can be entered into a card-based battle with another player or the AR.

Guest Star
Neku visits from
2008's *The World
Ends With You*...





POKÉMON CONQUEST

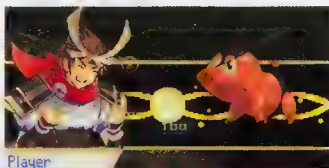
The best Pokémon spin-off since *Snap* • Words: Casey DeFreitas

Blending Pokémon with Nobunaga's Ambition—a turn-based grand strategy war game based on feudal Japanese history—hardly seems like a “two tastes that go great together” match. This unexpected crossover, however, results in a surprisingly satisfying strategy treat that’s accessible and addictive.

According to Pokémon Conquest’s mythology, the powerful Pokémon that created the land will reveal itself to the warlord who conquers all 17 kingdoms of the Ransel. This could be you...or the ambitious Nobunaga, who ruthlessly ruled real-life Japan in the 16th century, and will destroy the fictional region if you allow him to succeed.

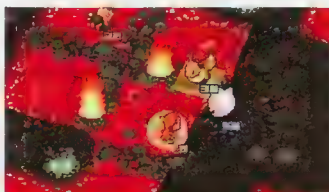
Recruiting warriors to your army and discovering Pokémon to complement them is important and time-consuming, and I happily devoted more hours than necessary to the process. The turn-based battle system is easy to learn for newcomers to the genre, and has enough alternate variables to interest longtime strategy fans. Even if veterans find the main story mode too easy, however, there’s plenty of challenge—and replay value—waiting in the unlockable episodes (see sidebar).

The Pokémon universe is well suited for a strategy-RPG. With hundreds of monsters and moves to choose from, it offers a lot to work with, and Pokémon Conquest takes full advantage. It’s delightfully familiar for franchise fans, but it also creates a unique experience for those approaching fresh. I’m already hoping for an even sweeter sequel. ☺



Player
I have formed a link with Tepig!

▲ You “link” rather than catch Pokémon. Warriors’ link quality differs with every Pokémon type.



▲ Treacherous terrain is common on the battlefield and can be just as challenging as the enemy.



UNENDING

Complete the main quest and unlock 30 more episodes featuring different Warlords and goals (such as Warlord Motonari’s quest to befriend 100 Pokémon). Wi-Fi-downloadable episodes will also be available.

DS
GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS



POKÉMON CONQUEST

INFO

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Koei
Platforms: DS

RELEASE DATE

June 18, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 2-player online

GENRE

Strategy-RPG

SUITABLE FOR

Anyone who thinks conquering the country with an adorable monster army sounds sweet

WHAT’S GREAT:

- ♥ Oodles of replay value
- ♥ A perfect introduction to strategy-RPGs
- ♥ Acutely addictive

WHAT’S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ Only 200 of 649 Pokémon present
- ✗ Main quest may be too simple for hardcore generals

RYAN SAYS:

The *Pokemon* formula hasn’t changed much since the ol’ days of *Red* and *Blue*, but *Conquest* is a refreshing change of pace.

OVERALL RATING:

4.5



© Gamer



XBOX 360



HEROES OF RUIN

INFO

Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: n-Space
Platforms: 3DS

RELEASE DATE

July 17, 2012

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 4-player online and local

GENRE

Action-RPG

SUITABLE FOR

Loot-lovers who enjoy fighting over stuff with friends



GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ Over 80,000 different items
- ♥ Randomly generated dungeons—every time
- ♥ In-depth multiplayer

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✕ Unable to follow subtitle-less cut-scenes on-the-go
- ✕ Each character uses the same dialogue

CHARLIE SAYS:

A 3DS game with good online multiplayer? That isn't named Mario Kart? I may have to try this for the novelty alone.



OVERALL RATING:

3.25



Gamer

HEROES OF RUIN

Friends are unnecessary to play, but needed to enjoy • Words: Casey DeFreitas

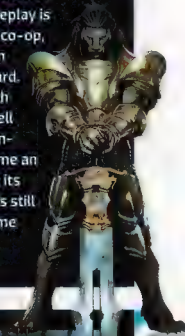
Since launch, the 3DS has lacked an expansive, co-op-focused RPG. *Heroes of Ruin*, an action-RPG with randomly generated dungeons, finally changes this. But while it offers an exciting premise, it doesn't exactly deliver as hoped.

Ataraxis, the sphinx responsible for ruling the city of Nexus, has fallen asleep—infinitely. You must search for a cure to wake the legendary beast, fighting countless types of baddies and picking up loot along the way. Up to four players can share this quest, locally or online, but the multiplayer aspect doesn't end with co-op. StreetPass and a website connectable to your game account build on an already robust experience.

Combat greatly resembles that of *Diablo*, and expansive skill trees allow unique customization, but not all characters hold up solo

even when specced for it. As a lone Architect, I constantly fretted over my health and struggled for an efficient attack strategy. As a Savage, I could spam my normal attack and ignore my health bar. I could have lessened my frustration by grinding, but why grind when I could just switch characters?

The action-oriented gameplay is mindlessly fun, especially in co-op, and the constant anticipation for new gear drove me forward. But many small details—such as unbalanced classes, as well as unfriendly menu and inventory interfaces—give the game an unpolished feel. Considering its uniqueness, *Heroes of Ruin* is still worth a try if you can get some companions involved.



CONFRONTATION AROUND EVERY CORNER



PUZZLES EXIST...

Color-coded puzzles like this one are rare and don't take much time to solve. Unfortunately, puzzles in the form of bosses are ruined by instructions swarming the screen. Sure, these kept me from getting stuck, but I also never felt true satisfaction after defeating an enemy.



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XBOX 360

XBOX
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PS3



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▼ Bowser's a great example of a power character.



Aggressive net play is crucial to winning.

MARIO TENNIS OPEN



Publisher: Nintendo • Developer: Camelot •
Platforms: 3DS • Words: Henry Gilbert

The Mario Tennis games are respected as some of the best in the arcade-style sports genre, and after a few years' absence, the series and original developer have returned with gameplay just as good as I remembered it. The easy-to-grasp controls mean you can immediately start to enjoy singles or doubles matches no matter what your familiarity with the sport. As you keep at it, that inviting surface gives way to deeper techniques locked within.

Anyone who tried the previous entries—or Hot Shots Tennis—will feel at home playing alone or online (a franchise first), but the solo portions are somewhat lacking. Instead of a campaign or story, Mario Tennis Open includes only tournaments and minigames. Admittedly, the latter are pretty cute, and I kept coming back to unlock different costumes for my Miis. Still, a truly dedicated campaign would have made an otherwise wonderfully intuitive and addictive experience complete.



MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 4-player online

GENRE Sports

RELEASE DATE

May 20, 2012

SUITABLE FOR

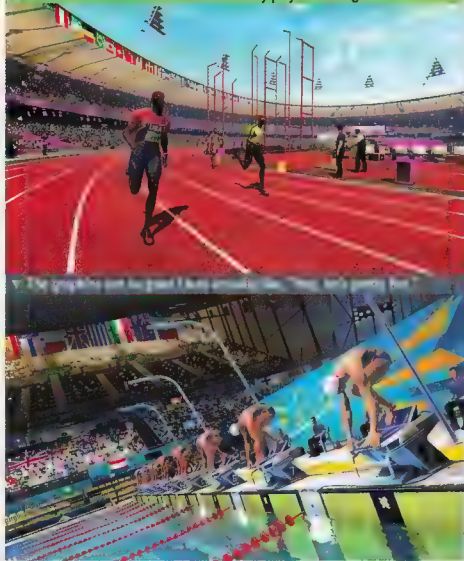
Tennis players and anyone who loves to dress up their Miis

OVERALL RATING:

3.5



"I would like to dedicate this medal to my player's aching thumb."



LONDON 2012



Publisher: Sega • Developer: Sega Studios Australia •
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC (reviewed on Xbox 360)
Words: Alexandra Hall

Olympics-based games have changed very little since 1983, when Konami trotted out Track & Field. Like so many others, Sega's London 2012 distills dozens of sporting events down to quick tests of button-mashing, stick-flicking prowess. The locales, athletes, and TV-style presentation are awfully pretty—gotta love Sega's trademark blue skies—but a fair few of the simplistic minigames feel unimaginative and dull. Many events feel too similar, with over half a dozen slightly different variations on running and swimming alone.

It's not bad—just kinda rote. Optional Kinect and Move support add a little life to Party Mode, and you might get some mileage out of the wealth of online options. If you really want a game to go with the 2012 Olympics, this will do the trick. Just don't be expecting anything so spectacular as Mary Lou Retton in 1984.



MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 4-player online

GENRE Sports

June 26, 2012

SUITABLE FOR

Couch-bound Olympics diehards, button-mashing enthusiasts

OVERALL RATING:

2.75



Publisher: Disney • Developer: Behaviour • Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC, Mac (reviewed on 360; also on Wii, DS) • Words: Michael Grimm

Given the spotty track record of games based on movies—especially movies aimed at children—I wasn't expecting much from Brave. But I was pleasantly surprised to discover a solid, God of War–style action-platformer (minus the Cyclops decapitations, of course).

You'll fight, jump, and puzzle your way across eight worlds steeped in Irish mythology instead of Greek, with lackluster visuals perked up by Pixar's charming design. Co-op play is included, too, though I found controlling the secondary character awkward due to visibility issues. In fact, the game's fixed camera is my biggest complaint, making many segments unnecessarily difficult. Brave is a little rough around the edges, but that's oddly in line with the fairy tale story, and this is an adaptation that will appeal to fans of the movie without disappointing more discerning players (aka any parent coerced into playing).



Up to 2-player co-op
Action-platformer

June 19, 2012

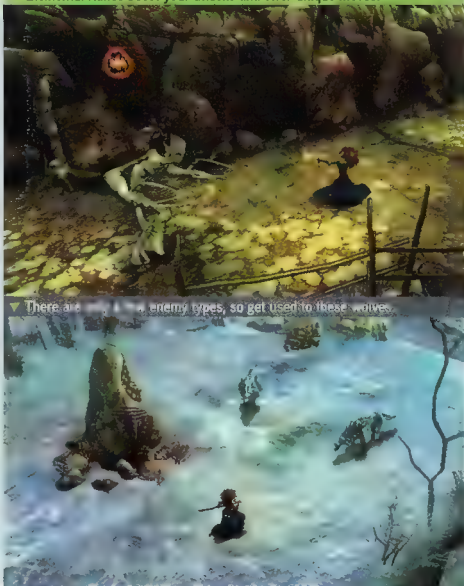
Kids who prefer a plucky princess over a cranky Kratos

OVERALL
RATING:

3



Elemental Runes boost your attacks and offer unique moves.



Publisher: Atari • Developer: Slightly Mad Studios • Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC (reviewed on Xbox 360) • Words: Gord Goble

Abandon hope all ye who enter the latest Test Drive expecting shades of entries past. Here, glitz takes a back seat to exacting physics. Sandbox–style racing gives way to closed, real-life venues. A deliberate, rock–steady hand is the only way to drive.

Ferrari Racing Legends forsakes the arcade approach and, in many ways, frivolity, too. In this brave new world, you'll never drive in the rain, damage your car, or tweak it to go faster. Spoilsports.

What you do get is a roster of the world's most storied tracks, more Ferraris than you can shake a stickshift at, and a sophisticated driving model that'll make you wish you owned a wheel. Aggressive AI drivers and demanding test driver–style scenarios complete this uneven, yet for some compelling, package. Ⓜ



MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Up to 8-player online

GENRE: Racing

RELEASE DATE

July 3, 2012

SUITABLE FOR

Racing realists, Ferrari fanatics, difficulty seekers

OVERALL
RATING:

3



▶ In their annual migration, Ferraris drive south to seek mates. Glorious!



Impossibly nimble, the game's AI-controlled cars are pure evil.



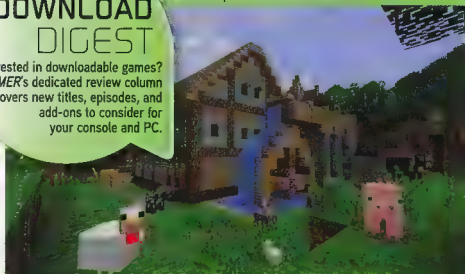


Words: Ryan Scott

DOWNLOAD
DIGEST

Interested in downloadable games? @GAMER's dedicated review column covers new titles, episodes, and add-ons to consider for your console and PC.

A little place to call home.



Already the best Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom game ever.



Weird, disjointed, sometimes fun—a good way to describe Fable as a whole.



FABLE HEROES

Publisher: Microsoft • Developer: Lionhead Studios
Price: \$10 • Platforms: XBLA (May 2, 2012)

Fable Heroes is a weird addendum to Lionhead's Fable universe, reimagining it as a vaguely creepy puppet-land and wrapping it in a four-player, button-mashing experience akin to Gauntlet Legends or some of Konami's classic arcade sidescrollers. It isn't bad; the drop-in co-op action makes it easy to play with friends, and choosing your character's skills involves a small degree of strategy. But let's be honest here: Everything that Fable Heroes does, Castle Crashers (also on XBLA, and still excellent) did much better in 2008.

OVERALL RATING: 2.75

MINECRAFT:
XBOX 360 EDITION

Publisher: Microsoft • Developer: 4J Studios/Mojang
Price: \$20 • Platforms: XBLA (May 9, 2012)

I never jumped on the Minecraft bandwagon, which has since morphed into a full-on freight train. "Didn't you ever play with LEGOs as a kid?" is the common retort to my Minecraft apathy; the truth is, when I buy LEGOs, I go for the do-it-yourself sets that come with assembly instructions. So, the scaled-down Xbox 360 port of Minecraft (which runs about a year behind its PC brethren in terms of features, a fact that makes it look disarmingly expensive) is my first real hands-on exposure to the whole phenomenon.

It's a gateway drug, pure and simple. Once I'd learned the simple steps to build anything (that's Minecraft's whole shtick) and then cast out into the vast world, I began wondering what a shared Minecraft setting might really look like...then I remembered that I'm playing the Xbox 360 port, which shares none of the PC version's true persistence (a world's owner has to be online for other occupants to play). It doesn't keep me from wandering for hours and crafting some of the most boring buildings Minecraft's ever seen, but I really am eyeing that PC version now...

OVERALL RATING: 4.0



This is about as normal as it gets.



DATURA

Publisher: SCEA • Developer: Plastic •
Price: \$10 • Platforms: PSN (May 8, 2012)

As far as I can tell, indie first-person adventure Datura—which shares its name with a genus of hallucinogenic flora—is basically a drug-addict simulator. Bugs and butterflies flit about its funkadelic forest setting, and periodic flash-somethings couch the whole episode in a fuller context of who-knows-what. The predominantly motion-centric controls failed to instill the intended sense of tactility as I groped and ambled my way through Datura's connect-the-dots puzzles, and the whole thing left me scratching my head.

OVERALL RATING: 2.5



RETRO CITY RAMPAGE

Publisher: VBlank Entertainment • Developer: VBlank Entertainment •
Price: \$15 • Platforms: PSN/XBLA/WiiWare (Summer 2012)

In *Retro City Rampage*'s opening moments, I counted references to *Grand Theft Auto*, *Mega Man 2*, *Duck Hunt*, *Contra*, *Elevator Action*, *Super Mario Bros.*, *Frogger*, *Ikari Warriors*, *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*, *Back to the Future*, *Metal Gear*, and (depending on how you look at it) *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. And that's just in the first mission.

This love letter to 8-bit games and '80s pop culture mechanically positions itself as a parody of first-generation GTA games, with dialogue and whole missions that poke fun—both sly and direct—at everything that 30-something gamers grew up with. The story makes the barest amount of sense, but I'd argue that that's the whole point.

It's not a game to take even slightly seriously. When an ersatz Doc Brown instructs you to evade soldiers and sneak into a truck parked at an Army base—right before your *Solid Snake*-esque contact informs you that he feels asleep—it's high time to tune out and enjoy the lunacy. The 8-bit renditions of such indie hits as *'Splosion Man* and *Super Meat Boy* add even more value to the already-awesome nostalgia trip, which will either wildly entertain or thoroughly nonplus you, depending on your frame of reference.

OVERALL RATING: 4.5



One minute, it's *Paperboy*...



...and the next, it's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*.



ROCK SMAAAAAASH!!!



ROCK OF AGES

Publisher: Atlus • Developer: ACE Team
Price: \$10 • Platforms: PSN (May 15, 2012)

In *Rock of Ages*, you control a giant boulder, hurtling it toward your opponent's base as they do the same to yours. You spend the beginning of the round building defenses at strategic points to knock one another off course, which paints the game as a strategic 3D tower-defense version of *Marble Madness*. Good defense placement feels a tad too difficult to me, and it works out awkwardly at best...and I'm about as good at this as I ever was at *Marble Madness* (i.e. not very). But hey, it might be for you, even if it isn't for me.

OVERALL RATING: 3.0



Tails, in one of his more useful moments.



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 4: EPISODE 2

Publisher: Sega • Developer: Dimps/Sonic Team •
Price: \$15 • Platforms: PSN/PC (May 15, 2012), XBLA (May 16, 2012)

This second—and, seemingly, final—chapter in the *Sonic 4* saga sends classic Sonic sidekick Tails tagging along for the sidescrolling festivities, and he hampers the game's sense of speed as often as he adds to it. He brings some handy environment-clearing abilities to the table, though he sometimes feels like a third wheel for Sonic and his cherry-red racing shoes. That aside, it's down to more of the same super-fast fun that defines golden-era Sonic, though with a bevy of borderline-unfair boss fights.

OVERALL RATING: 3.5



OF GAMER RATINGS

GAME/PRODUCT	ISSUE #	SCORE OUT OF 5
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The Adventures of Tintin	16	2.5
Armored Core V	18	4.5
Assassin's Creed Revelations	15	4.5
Assura's Wrath	18	3.25

Batman: Arkham City	14	5.0
Battlefield 3	15	4.0
Battleship (3DS)	20	2.5
Binary Domain	18	3.5
Birds of Steel	20	4.0
Bit.Trip.Complete	14	4.5
Bit.Trip.Saga	14	4.25
The Black Eyed Peas Experience	16	3.5
Brave: The Video Game	21	3.0
Blades of Time	19	3.0

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	15	4.75
Capcom Digital Collection	18	3.0
Carnival Island	16	3.0
Cartoon Network		
Punch Time Explosion XL	16	2.5
Cooking Mama 4	15	4.25
Crush3D	17	4.0
Cursed Crusade	15	2.75

The Darkness II	17	4.0
Dark Souls	14	4.5
Dead Rising 2: Off the Record	15	3.0
Devil May Cry HD Collection	19	2.75
Diablo III	21	4.25
Dirt Showdown	20	4.0
Disney Universe	15	3.0
Dragon Ball Z: Ultimate Tenkaichi	16	2.75
Dragon's Dogma	20	4.0

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	16	5.0
EyePet & Friends	16	2.75

FIFA Street	17	3.75
Final Fantasy XIII-2	17	4.25
Forza Motorsport 4	14	4.5

Game of Thrones	20	3.0
Go Vacation	15	3.0
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	16	3.0
Grand Slam Tennis 2	17	4.0
Gravity Rush	21	4.25

Halo: Combat Evolved Anniversary	16	4.0
Heroes of Ruin	21	3.25
Hole in the Wall: Deluxe Edition	15	2.5
Horses 3D	20	3.75

The House of the Dead: Overkill—Extended Cut	15	3.75
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Inversion	20	3.25
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GAME/PRODUCT	ISSUE #	SCORE OUT OF 5
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Jagged Alliance: Back in Action	18	3.0
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Karaoke Revolution Glee Volume 3	16	4.5
Kid Icarus: Uprising	19	3.25
Kinect Disneyland Adventures	16	4.5
Kinect Rush	19	4.0
Kinect Sports Season Two	16	3.0
Kinect Star Wars	19	3.75
King of Fighters XIII	16	2.5
Kingdom Hearts 3D [Dream Drop Distance]	21	3.5
Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning	17	4.75
Kirby's Return to Dream Land	16	3.25

The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	15	4.5
LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes	21	4.0
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	16	4.25
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7 (Vita)	19	2.5
Lollipop Chainsaw	21	3.0
London 2012—Official Video Game of the Olympic Games	21	2.75
The Lord of the Rings: War in the North	15	3.75

Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games (3DS)	18	3.25
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games (Wii)	18	2.75
Mario Kart 7	16	4.0
Mario Party 9	18	4.0
Mario Tennis Open	21	3.5
Mass Effect 3	18	5.0
Max Payne 3	20	4.0
Medieval Moves: Deadmund's Quest	16	3.25
Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D	17	4.5
Might & Magic Heroes VI	15	3.5
MLB 12 The Show	18	4.5
MLB 2K12	17	3.5
Mortal Kombat (Vita)	19	4.25

NASCAR Unleashed	15	3.5
Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm Generations	18	3.5
NBA 2K12	14	4.75
NCAA Football 13	21	4.0
Need For Speed The Run	16	3.5
NeverDead	18	2.5
Ninja Gaiden 3	18	3.0

Otomedius Excellent	16	2.5
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Pokémon Rumble Blast	15	2.5
Pokémon Conquest	21	4.5
PokePark 2: Wonders Beyond	18	3.0
Pro Evolution Soccer 2012	15	3.5
Prototype 2	18	4.5

GAME/PRODUCT	ISSUE #	SCORE OUT OF 5
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Rage	14	4.5
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	15	4.0
Raving Rabbids: Alive & Kicking	15	3.25
Rayman Origins	15	4.5
Resident Evil: Revelations	17	4.0
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	19	2.75
Resistance: Burning Skies	21	3.0
Ridge Racer Unbounded	19	3.25
Risen 2: Dark Waters (PC)	19	3.75
Rhythm Heaven Fever	18	4.5

Saints Row: The Third	15	4.25
Serious Sam 3: BFE	16	4.25
Silent Hill Downpour	18	3.5
Silent Hill HD Collection	17	2.75
The Sims 3: Showtime	18	3.5
Sniper Elite V2	19	3.0
Sonic Generations	15	3.25
Sorcery	20	4.0
Soulcalibur V	17	4.0
Spec Ops: The Line	21	4.0
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	15	4.0
Spirit Camera: The Cursed Memoir	19	3.0
SSX	17	4.0
Starhawk	20	4.5
Star Wars: The Old Republic	17	4.5
Steel Battalion Heavy Armor	21	4.0
Street Fighter X Tekken	18	4.0
Stronghold 3	15	2.5
Super Mario 3D Land	16	4.5
Syndicate	17	4.0

Tales of Graces f	17	4.0
Tekken 3D Prime Edition	17	3.5
Tekken Hybrid	16	2.5
Tera	19	4.0
Test Drive: Ferrari Racing Legends	21	3.0
Tetris Axis	15	3.25
Theatrhythm Final Fantasy	20	4.25
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13	18	4.0
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier	20	4.0
Twisted Metal	18	3.75

UFC Undisputed 3	17	3.0
Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3	16	5.0
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	15	5.0
Unit 13	18	4.0

The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings	19	4.5
WWE '12	16	4.0

Yakuza: Dead Souls	19	3.25
Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2012	16	4.5

Zumba Fitness Rush	18	4.5
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LOTSAS



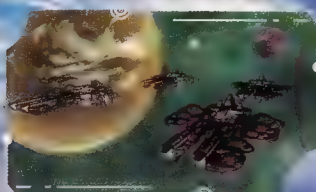
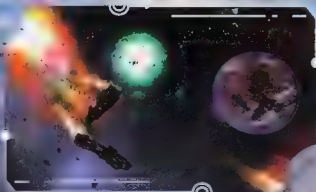
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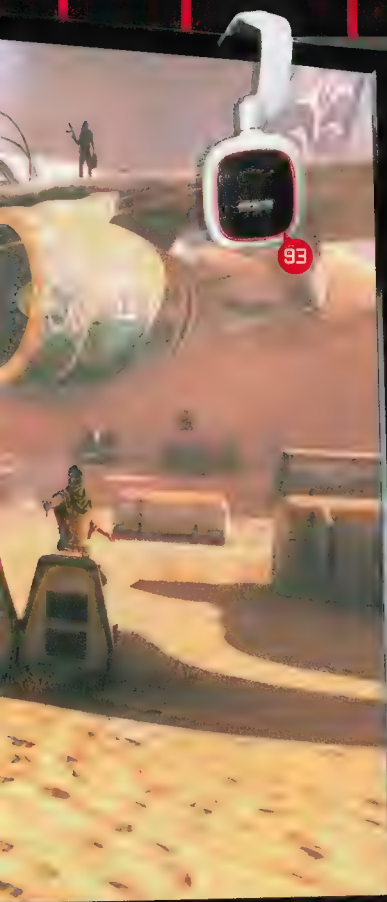
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- 90 Toshiba 50-inch L5200U LED TV
- 92 Astro Gaming A40 Gaming Headset
- 93 Astro Gaming A30 Gaming Headset
- 94 EVGA GeForce GTX 680 Graphics Card
- 95 HTC Evo 4G LTE Android Phone



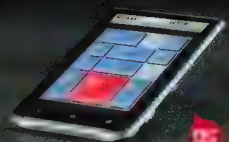
WIL SAYS:

Good gear can enhance your gaming experience, so we'll tell you if a super-thin 50-inch LCD TV would help. Or maybe you're looking for audio enhancement, in which case Astro Gaming's A30 and A40 gaming headsets—now sold at Best Buy—might be of interest. And DIY gamers, check out our look at EVGA's GTX 680 graphics card.



90

94



95

Photos: Samantha Berg



**TOSHIBA 50-INCH
LS200U LED TV**

Manufacturer: Toshiba

us.toshiba.com

Price: \$1100.00

OVERALL SCORE: 4



TOSHIBA 50-INCH L5200U LED TV

This 50-inch flatscreen is ideal for gaming

Words: William D'Neal

Sleek profiles, remarkable power efficiency, and high levels of brightness make LED backlit TVs well suited for gaming. Toshiba's 50LS200U is no exception, and even manages to sidestep many of the typical deficiencies of this still-new technology, such as inferior color reproduction, motion blur, and less-than-stellar black tones.

In short, it's a simple, elegantly designed gaming television well worth a thousand dollars. (Quick spec talk: The L5200U comes with a standard setup of three HDMI ports, one set of component video inputs, and USB media support.)

I use the word "gaming" as a qualifier because, while playing games and viewing the 50LS200U at a direct 90-degree viewing angle, I was excited by the crisp, bright experience. It looked good, even in bright daylight conditions in my living room. In fact, in many ways, it's better than good—I was surprised by the quality and depth of black tones on the set. There's no sign of the gray, washed-out appearance that afflicted older LEDs and LCDs.

The 120Hz refresh rate means there's no motion blur whatsoever. In fact, if you've never experienced a 120Hz TV, you may find yourself unnerved at how smoothly everything—including TV—moves. Considerable debate has centered on whether or not anyone needs more than 60Hz in a modern flatscreen, with people on both sides of the argument. My take? The difference is subtle, but it exists—ultimately, it doesn't hurt.

I only had one real problem with the 50LS200U: When viewing the screen at wide angles (even 75 degrees), the image quality deteriorates commensurate with the angle. It's not as bad as many LEDs, but it is noticeably worse than just about any plasma screen.

While this 50-incher doesn't quite provide the color depth and picture quality of a plasma screen at a similar price range, it comes very close. For games, which tend to use more exaggerated and saturated color schemes, you won't notice any real difference at all.

01 GREAT FOR GAMING

Color is on point, and the reproduction of black and dark tones is surprisingly great.

02 REMOTE REMOTE

I wasn't a big fan of the remote; it feels clunky and unintuitive. Hello, universal remote!

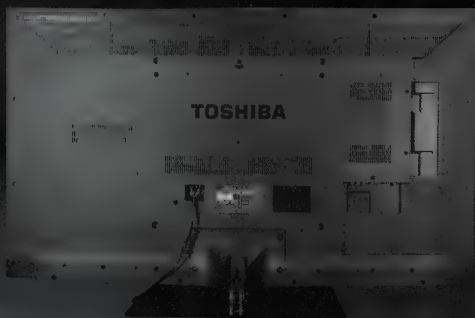
03 DYNAMIC AUDIO

The L5200U's speakers offer a surprising level of quality, bass response notwithstanding.

04 THIN IS IN

One of the advantages of an LED screen is that it permits a modern, light-and-thin profile.

48 in.



**01 HIDE EARS**

The earcups, while somewhat heavy, are still extremely comfortable for long sessions.

**02 BOOM**

In-game chat quality is key to successful gaming, and my "friends" reported that my obnoxious voice was loud and clear.

03 LIGHT

I have a relatively large head, so headphones can feel tight. Not so with the A40.

ASTRO GAMING A40 GAMING HEADSET

Manufacturer: Astro Gaming
astrogaming.com
Price: \$279.99 (bundled with
wireless Mixamp)
\$249.99 (bundled with wired
Mixamp)

OVERALL SCORE: 4.5



ASTRO GAMING A40 GAMING HEADSET

Pro-caliber gaming audio for PS3, Xbox 360, and PC Words: William O'Neal

When it comes to gaming headsets, Astro Gaming is often considered the king of the mountain. And until its A50 Wireless Gaming Headset was recently announced at this year's E3, the company's A40 Gaming Headset was its flagship product.

Astro Gaming has a long view when it comes to its products, and expects each headset to have a several-year life cycle. This

philosophy rings true with the A40 in that the headset in no way shows its age.

As a multiplatform gamer, I tested the A40 (which supports 5.1 Dolby audio) on every system I could throw at it: a gaming PC, Xbox 360, and PS3.

Audio quality with this headset was amazing. In-game effects were crisp, as the sounds of bullets bouncing off of nearby

walls contrasted with the thunderous boom of explosions.

Another area where the A40 excels is with the myriad hookups available. Suffice it to say that you'll be able to hook the A40 up to whatever gaming setup you're using, regardless of whether you're a PC diehard or a console gamer. This is one of the best gaming headsets I've ever used.

01 ON EAR

The A30's on-ear design is less bulky and lighter than the much larger A40's.

02 ON THE GO

The A30 can also double as a mobile headset when you're out and about.



03 MIXAMP

Both Astro Gaming headsets are bundled with the company's Mixamp (which comes in wireless and wired flavors).

ASTRO GAMING A30 GAMING HEADSET

One part gaming headset, one part mobile headset Words: William D'Neal

If Astro Gaming's A40 is the company's pro-gaming headset, the A30 is its solution for the gamer who wants something a lot less bulky and a lot more versatile.

While the A40 is designed to stay at home with your gaming system, the more svelte and portable A30, with its on-ear design, doubles as a standalone headset that you

can also use with a portable audio player or your cell phone.

Technologically, the A30 is pretty similar to the A40, save the closed-back design that helps keep the sound focused inward. Being an Astro Gaming product, the A30 ships with so many cables that you'd be hard-pressed to not be able to hook it up to whatever

gaming system you prefer: PS3, Xbox 360, or your gaming PC.

While the A30 ships with the boom mic that is standard for gaming headsets, I especially liked the less obnoxious inline mic. This also came in handy when using the A30 as a mobile headset—and hey, the set is pretty stylish, too.

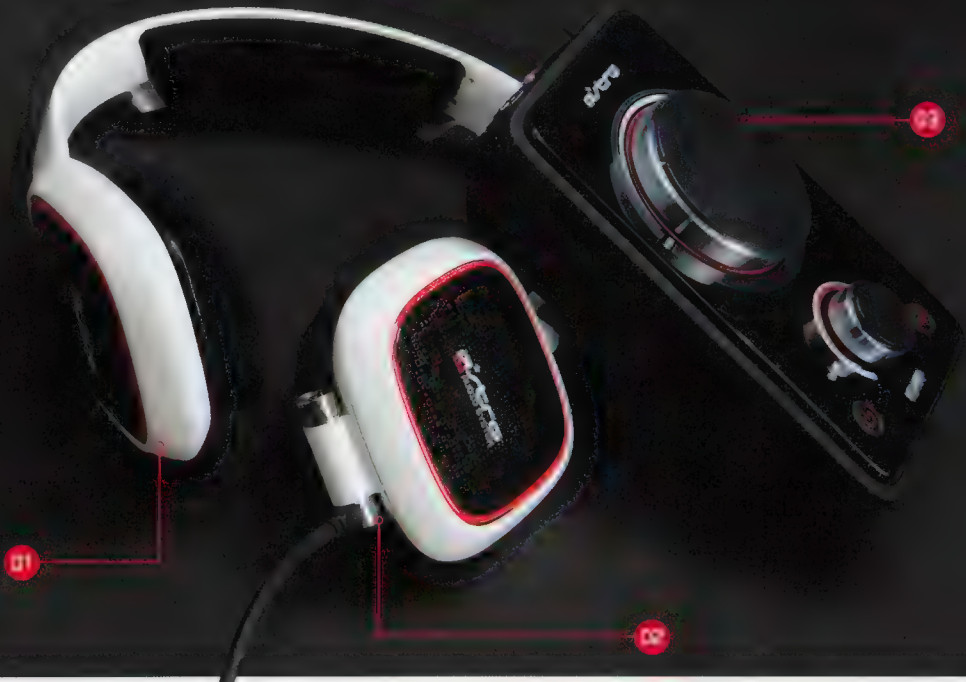
ASTRO GAMING A30 GAMING HEADSET

Manufacturer: Astro Gaming
astrogaming.com

Price: \$229.99 (bundled with wireless Mixamp)

\$199.99 (bundled with wired Mixamp)

OVERALL SCORE: 4.5





EVGA GEFORCE GTX 680 2GB GDDR5 PCI EXPRESS 3.0 GRAPHICS CARD

PC gamers rejoice! Nvidia's GPU is smoking fast!

Words: William O'Neal

EVGA GEFORCE
GTX 680 2 GB
GDDR5 PCI
EXPRESS 3.0
GRAPHICS CARD

Manufacturer: EVGA
evga.com

Price: \$499.99

OVERALL SCORE: 4.5



01 HDMI

The available HDMI port made a dual-screen scenario easy to set up.

02 DUAL DVI

If you have two DVI-capable monitors, this is an easy way to hook them up.

03 KEEP IT COOL

EVGA's GTX 680 comes stock with a solid heatsink and built-in fan to keep the card running cool.

The graphics-card game has long been a two-horse race featuring AMD (formerly ATI) and Nvidia as consistent competitors. Historically, the two companies would routinely leapfrog each other's technology, which would leave gamers in a rather precarious position. Just because AMD's current flagship product is the "fastest" GPU (graphics processing unit) available, that doesn't guarantee that, a few months down the road, Nvidia's new GPU won't surpass it. Such was the case with Nvidia's

long-awaited GeForce GTX 680, which overshadows AMD's Radeon HD 7970 GPU.

Sporting 2GB of memory, EVGA's GeForce GTX 680 was an absolute screamer. I played everything from *Diablo III* to *Battlefield 3* at the highest resolutions and experienced nary a stutter.

Of course, power comes at a premium, and this card's nearly \$500 price tag means that it's not for the casual. Respectable PC gamers would be remiss to not consider tossing this baby in their main rig.

HTC EVO 4G LTE ANDROID PHONE

Quite possibly the best HTC handset yet

— Words: William D'Neale

HTC fanboys will notice one striking thing about the HTC Evo 4G LTE: It sure looks a lot like the HTC One X. While similar in many ways, Sprint's answer to the HTC One X does bring other offerings to the table.

Rocking an impressive 1.5GHz Snapdragon processor, the Evo 4G LTE also sports an amazing 4.7-inch display that, while plenty big, doesn't weigh you down like the even larger Samsung Galaxy Note. Add to that the 8-megapixel, rear-facing camera and we're talking about one beefed-up cell phone.

Like the HTC One X, the Evo 4G LTE ships with 16GB of onboard memory. However, the Evo 4G LTE bests its older brother by including a microSD slot that lets you up its capacity to a whopping 32GB.

Because Sprint phones have historically been relatively simple to use as mobile hotspots, I decided to take this handset with me to E3 to see how the mobile hotspot functionality compared to that of T-Mobile (another carrier that provides unlimited data) and get some mobile game time in.

While the mobile hotspot was in fact easy to set up, I found the Sprint network to be much slower than that of T-Mobile. This may be due to the fact that the LTE network hasn't been fully rolled out. That said, in areas that weren't as slammed as the LA Convention Center, the mobile hotspot was fine for such simple tasks as surfing the Web.

As for gaming, this is where the HTC EVO 4G LTE really showed its stuff. Games like *Riptide GP* look particularly good. Simply put, Sprint users have no reason to skip this handset.



01. CAN CHEESE

The HTC Evo 4G LTE boasts a rock-solid 8-megapixel, rear-facing camera.

02. BRIGHT

The display on this handset is incredible. It's large, bright, and great for gaming.

03. HTC SENSE

Version 4 of the Android interface—known as HTC Sense—is both leaner and faster with the Evo 4G LTE.

01

02

03



HTC EVO 4G LTE ANDROID PHONE

Manufacturer: HTC
htc.com

Price: \$199.99*

OVERALL SCORE: 4.5

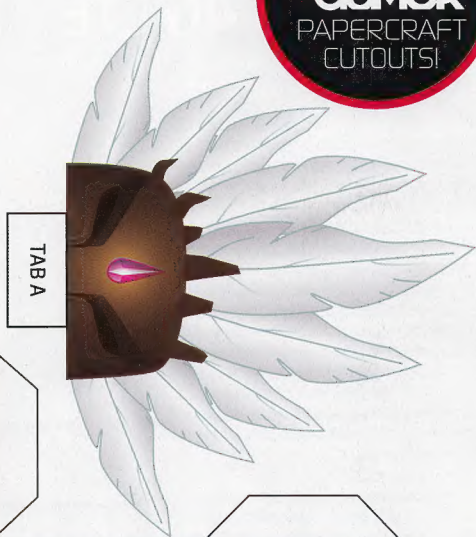


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